

PRAYER

Dependence on a Faithful God



A Grace Baptist Church Resource

Foreword

By Pastor Eugene

When the disciples asked their Lord, “Teach us to pray”, Jesus replied with these famous words, which have come to be known as the Lord’s Prayer:

*Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation. (Luke 11:2-4)*

The Lord’s Prayer is not meant to be thoughtlessly recited in a mechanical way. Rather, Jesus is providing his disciples with a framework for prayer. His “model” prayer is the pattern that ought to shape our own prayers. From Jesus’ words, we can glean four key aspects of prayer:

1) Adoration: “Father, hallowed be your name.”

We are to praise God for He alone is worthy of our worship. We magnify His glorious attributes and extol the perfections of his person. He is high and lifted up—our sovereign, all-powerful Creator as well as our loving and gracious Redeemer.

2) Confession: “Forgive us our sins... And lead us not into temptation.”

When we see God for who He truly is, we also realise how far short we fall of His glory. We confess our sins to our holy God, humbly drawing near to Him, seeking His mercy through the gospel. We acknowledge our need for His grace, and we ask Him for forgiveness. We also ask God to guard us from sin and empower us to live in righteousness.

3) Thanksgiving: “Give us each day our daily bread.”

While the Lord’s Prayer does not explicitly mention thanksgiving, it is implied in the request for daily provision. We thank God for how he faithfully and continually meets our needs. Thus, we approach God with humility and gratitude, putting pride and any sense of entitlement aside. Indeed, we are debtors to his grace.

4) Supplication: “Your kingdom come.”

Jesus encourages us to bring our requests to our Heavenly Father, who cares for us and generously supplies our daily needs. But this does not give us carte blanche to ask for whatever we want. The values and priorities of the gospel should guide what we ask for. Rather than asking out of self-centred or self-seeking motivations, we are to put God first. Therefore, we pray for His kingdom to come, for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. We ask God to grow the gospel in the world, in our church, and in our hearts. We ask God to make us more like His Son, for our eternal good and for his glory.

To deepen our prayerful dependence on God, we are beginning 2022 with a sermon series focusing on each of these aspects: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

Besides hearing the weekly sermons, I encourage us to also read the 24 devotions contained in this booklet. Each week, six entries will highlight one of the aspects of prayer. These are reflections on a diverse sample of Scriptural prayers, showcasing the riches of what the Bible says concerning prayer. I encourage us to make these prayers our own, by meditating on them and praying through them daily.

I'm grateful for the many GBC members who have penned these devotions. I praise God for their labour of love, to build up the body of Christ. May these devotions spur us on to pray with greater spiritual depth and fervour. And may we as a church grow in prayerfulness and faith in our faithful God, who delights in the prayers of his people.

Acknowledgements

The entries in this booklet have been written up by the following GBC members. We are thankful to God for them!

Andrew Sung
Anita Set
Beh Soo Hee
Bibianna Yeo
Caleb Yap
Carrie Chong
Chan Yoke Meng
Esther Cher
Eugene Low
Gerald Chua
Hewlett Chew
Huang Weiquan
Jonathan Tan
Joshua Lowe
Lam Lup Meng
Mok Chuan-Xin
Nehemiah Chong
Ngo Thian Chye
Oliver Chia
Rolland Li
Ryan Tan
Samuel Ho
Tan Chong Tien
Tan Sze Gar
The Miauw Suang
Tiang Siew Ting
Yanadi Tan Ivory

Adoration

**“There is none holy like the LORD:
for there is none besides you;
there is no rock like our God.”**

(1 Sam 2:2)

If you're like me, you may struggle with how your personal prayers can end up sounding like a laundry list of requests. Of course, there is nothing at all amiss with asking of God. After all, He encourages us to not be anxious about anything, but to make our requests known to Him (Phil 4:6).



Adoration

Yet, prayer does involve more than merely presenting our petitions to God. In fact, in the very verse I just quoted, we are exhorted to pray “with thanksgiving”. Therefore, even as we ask of God, we are to praise and thank Him for who He is and what He has done for his people.

Adoration is a key aspect of prayer. It is precisely because God alone is worthy of all praise that we make our supplications to him. Adoration expresses our delight and satisfaction in God Himself. We delight first and foremost in the Giver, not in His gifts to us. Thus, adoration does not depend on our circumstances. We continue to praise God, both in and out of season. In the poignantly beautiful words of the prophet Habakkuk: “Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.” (Hab 3:17-18)

How do we adore God in prayer? We extol the perfections of his person, the wonders of His works, and the wisdom of His ways. Take Psalm 103, for example. The psalmist extols God's perfections by praising His character and attributes: “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” (Ps 103:8)

Secondly, David adores God for the wonders of His works. He forgives iniquity, heals diseases, redeems our lives from the pit, crowns us with steadfast love and mercy, and satisfies us with good so that our youth is renewed like the eagle's (Ps 103:3-5). God works righteousness and justice for the oppressed (Ps 103:6); he shows compassion to His children (Ps 130:13).

Third, David acknowledges that God's ways are higher than ours. We are “like grass”, transient and temporary. The steadfast love of God, in contrast, is from everlasting to everlasting (Ps 103:17). His kingdom is forever: “The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all.” (Ps 103:19)

May the following devotions help us to adore God in our prayers!

The Lord's Prayer

(Matthew 6:9-13)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Jesus himself models for his disciples a pattern of prayer that should inform and shape how we pray. In the first three petitions, He teaches that their prayers ought to be concerned with the preeminence of God. His prayer opens with God-ward reverence, is concerned with God's royal reign over his people, and invites the perfect administration of His will on earth as they anticipate the final form of His Kingdom.

***God's
preeminence
is our focus in
prayer.***

In the last three petitions, Jesus teaches that their prayers ought to bring to God their personal needs. His prayer pleads God for their daily necessities, for the restoration of personal fellowship with God and fellow man, and finally, for the sparing from testing and deliverance from Satan's schemes.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

Though we do not rigidly & formulaically apply each petition of the Lord's Prayer in every prayer, it does inform the shape of our regular prayer diet. Our prayers should be concerned with God's renown and His rule before bringing to Him our needs.

***We come
before the King
of creation in
prayer and
ascribe to Him
due praise.***

This way of praying ascribes to God due praise, as we come before the King of creation. It fills our hearts with awe as we are permitted to approach and freely access Him like our father. It preaches to our own hearts of what we truly need to hear: despite how our world might be falling apart, God is sovereignly reigning and we are most blessed when he rules ever larger in our lives.

The God Who Graciously Delivers (2 Samuel 22:1-51)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

David faced a near-death situation and Sheol (2 Sam 22:6). As he felt helpless in the situation, God, who He is (2 Sam 22:2-3,32-33,47), is the only hope that David has. God stoops down from His highest place to save David in his lowest place (2 Sam 22:17). God treats His people with special care because we have been counted righteous, blameless, and clean, only because of Christ and what He has done (2 Sam 22:21-25).

We can feel secure and confident that God hears and answers our prayers because Christ has imputed his righteousness to us, making us God's people whom He loves.

God hears and answers our prayer through the finished work of Christ.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

We can trust God for He is unchanging, almighty, faithful, and ever-present. In Christ, the almighty and sovereign God is for us and for our eternal good.

In Christ, we can come to God boldly, humbly, and without shame.

In Christ, we can be confident that God will not deal with us according to our flaws but according to Christ's perfection that has been counted as ours.

We can trust our unchanging, almighty, faithful God by turning to Him in prayer.

In Christ, we can be confident that God will not only hear us, but He will also answer us, according to His good purposes.

In Christ, our future is secure because Christ has defeated the enemies of sin and death.

Our Lord Whose Name Is Majestic (Psalm 8:1-9)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

The opening words of this psalm (Ps 8:1) are repeated at the end (Ps 8:9), and these verses form the theme of the passage: the covenantal name of God, YHWH (pronounced as “Yahweh”), is majestic in all the earth. This is the God of creation, who made the world and placed man as the object of God’s special attention and love in Genesis 1.

God, whose name is majestic in all the earth, is also mindful of man and cares for him.

Despite the fall of man in Genesis 3, God had a plan for fallen mankind in the promise of the Seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent. The psalmist stands amazed that God, the Lord of heaven and earth, is mindful of man and cares for him, which allows us to celebrate our privileged place in the created order as God’s representative and stewards of His creation.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

We can learn from the psalmist to remember why we are able to enjoy our place in God’s created order. What indeed is man that God is mindful of him, or the son of man, that He cares for him? Why would God crown man with glory and honour, and give him dominion over the works of His hands?

We adore and praise the God who graciously poured out His love on sinners.

We do not deserve His special care and love in light of our rebellion and sin, yet God has poured out His love and grace upon us. For this reason, He is deserving of all our praise and adoration. The Lord of heaven and earth has redeemed His people for Himself, to enjoy Him forevermore. Let us praise Him, for His name is indeed majestic in all the earth!

The Lord Who Does Great Things (Luke 1:46-55)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Mary praises God from within her as her soul magnifies the Lord and her spirit rejoices in God her Saviour (Lk 1:46). God and God alone is worthy of her worship, and she praises Him for who He is and what He has done. She adores a holy and just God (Lk 1:49-51), acknowledges His steadfast promises (Lk 1:52,54-55), and trusts only in His sovereignty— a God who is worthy of all praise!

God — who He is and what He has done — is worthy of our worship.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

As unworthy sinners, we marvel with Mary that God sees us in our humble state (Lk 1:48). It is with this humble heart that we come before Him to thank Him for His unconditional love and rejoice in His saving grace for us through His son, Jesus Christ.

Mary's song teaches us that prayer is not only to ask God for our needs and to receive from Him, but also to adore and rejoice in Him. O come, let us adore Him!

We go to God in prayer not only to ask and receive of Him, but also to adore and rejoice in Him.

The Lord Who Keeps His Promises (Luke 1:67–69)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Zechariah's prophesy is perhaps a prelude to the voice of God once again being in the midst of men. It has been some time since the last prophet and the covenant LORD of Israel might have appeared silent and inactive in prolonged oppression and godlessness.

In Luke 1, this silence is broken with a hopeful sound. The merciful LORD of Israel will keep his covenant and deliver His people. Zechariah's prophesy speaks of a God who will rescue his people, and fulfil his promises to Abraham, establish the everlasting king from David's line, that will lead His people from darkness, into glorious light.

***God
remembers
and will keep
His promises.***

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

Like the original audience, we too feel the reality of sitting in darkness. The ache of sin within and without continue to remind us that this world is not our home. Luke 1 calls us to trust in the Saviour that has come, and whose work on the cross has delivered us from the hand of our greatest enemy, sin and death (Luke 1:74).

***We feel the
reality of sin
and darkness
and turn to
trust in the
God who is
merciful.***

Pray for faith to trust in the merciful work of His son. Pray for faith to trust in God's timing, that His good judgement will come.

The God Who Is Sovereign

(Acts 4:23-30)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

God, who created everything, is sovereign over all things. There are those who oppose God, but this does not stop God from working His mighty plan. Those who opposed God crucified his anointed one — Jesus Christ, but three days later Jesus rose from the dead, and this is all according to God's plan to reconcile us.

God will continue to sovereignly work and the gospel will continue to spread for God will empower and equip his servants to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. The creator God is sovereign and no one can oppose his plan.

God, our Sovereign Creator, worked through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

We have an amazing and sovereign God who is in control of all things. He created the heavens, the earth, the sea and everything in it and He remains in control over all these things. Everything happens according to His plan. It was His plan to send Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. It was in His plan that Jesus rose from the dead and is now seated in heaven with the Father.

By His supreme power, the gospel of Jesus Christ will continue to be proclaimed. He is worthy of our praise and adoration because His plans are good and are never thwarted.

We can confidently turn to and praise the God who is in control of all things.

Confession



**“... we have sinned and done wrong
and acted wickedly and rebelled,
turning aside from your
commandments and rules.”**

(Dan 9:5)

What is confession? Confession of sin is acknowledging our sin to the Lord. It is our agreeing with God's assessment that we have wronged and offended God in our affections, thoughts, words and deeds. Confession occurs at the start of the Christian life as we repent of our sins and turn to place our faith in Jesus Christ. However, confession is also an ongoing practice throughout our Christian lives.

Confession



Because confession is our ongoing practice in our Christian lives, it is an essential part of our prayers and prayers together as a church. The practice of confession cultivates our awareness of our wrongs and strengthens our fight against sin. It promotes humility. And it strengthens our relationship with our Father God as it allows us to receive mercy and experience his fellowship.

How do we confess our sins in our prayers? Daniel 9:3-6 provides us with a model of a prayer of confession by the prophet Daniel.

"Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep His commandments, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land."

Firstly, we turn to our Lord God and plead mercy (Dan 9:3). Secondly, we trust that our God is a God of steadfast love who keeps His word (Dan 9:4). Thirdly, we acknowledge that we have sinned and done wrong; we acted wickedly, rebelled against God, and abandoned His commandments and instructions. We have not listened and obeyed God's Word to us (Dan 9:5-6). In doing the above, we confess our sins to our Lord God, rich in mercy and steadfast love, and He will forgive us our sins through Christ Jesus.

God's People Confess Their Sins (1 Kings 8:22-53)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Solomon devoted a major portion of his prayer at the dedication of the temple on the confession of the future sins of the Israelites and pleaded with God to forgive His people. Drawing from the past history of the Israelites, he foresaw that the people would fall into sin and incur God's just judgement. Nonetheless, Solomon was also confident of God's covenantal love and faithfulness to His people. This moved him to plead with God to forgive their sins when they turn to him in repentance and to deal with them mercifully.

God is the truly wise One who can do all things and whose plans will never be thwarted.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

We too, are prone to sin and will fall into sin time and again. We need to come to God and confess our sins daily and whenever we fall we sin. We have a covenantal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. His sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection pave the way for the forgiveness of our sins and the restoration of our relationship with our heavenly Father.

We do not need to hide, but can freely confess our sins by faith in Jesus.

Let us come to God in confidence through Jesus Christ that He will hear our confession, forgive our sins, restore us and help us to walk in His path of righteousness (1 John 1:9).

Job Acknowledges His Pride

(Job 42:2-6)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Job's final recorded prayer is a response to God's divine interrogation that reveals to Job his own weakness and foolishness, and just how little he actually knows and understands about God and himself (Job 38:1-40:2). Job responds to God's challenge to him in Job 38:2-3, and he withdraws his accusations against the Almighty. He recognises and admits that he had spoken rashly, presumptuously, and ignorantly, beyond what he knows. He recognises and admits that in his circumstances, he had not persevered in a right attitude towards God, but had become bitter, resentful, and accusatory. And he repents in humility.

God judges the sins of His people, but also shows covenantal love when they repent.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

While it is right and good to lament in times of difficulty, we must take much care not to allow a bitter and resentful spirit to fester, which is ultimately directed towards the Almighty. Bitterness and resentment ultimately find their roots in some form of unbelief towards God – that He is not trustworthy, or good, or sovereign, or that we know better. In such situations, may we humbly examine what truths about Him we are not believing, confess and repent of our unbelief, and trust that He is faithful to lead us to the truth of who He is.

We humbly confess our unbelief, and turn to trust in our faithful God.

David Confesses To The God Who Forgives (Psalm 32:1-11)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

The psalmist calls us to see that those who stop hiding their sins and repent from them find joy in God's forgiveness and the complete removal of guilt (Ps 32:1-5). Those who refuse to repent suffer anguish, experience God's discipline and will face His eventual judgment.

The godly confess in prayer with timeliness, and find refuge in God, His protection & deliverance, teaching & watchful counsel (Ps 32:6-11). They will rejoice in God's steadfast love. The wicked and uncontrollable will find only sorrow.

***God
hears and
forgives
sinners who
confess their
transgressions.***

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

When burdened with the guilt of sin, we have two choices - one leads to great blessings, and the other to sorrow and anguish. We not only need to make the correct choice every time, we need to be timely in our choice.

***We
repent
because we
trust in the
finished work of
Christ.***

Our choice of prompt contrition over sin must involve turning away from the sin and back towards God in prayerful confession. We do so also fully confident in Christ Jesus' finished work on the cross on our behalf. In doing so we can rejoice in the assurance of God's forgiveness, and experience His deliverance and steadfast love.

Ezra Confesses Israel's Disobedience (Ezra 9:5-15)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Ezra, the prophet models for us a godly response to sin with a public and corporate confession of the sins of God's people. Ezra begins by pouring out his heart to God (Ezra 9:6). He expresses his deep grief and pain, ashamed over the iniquities of God's people who have sinned against Him and forsaken His commandments.

God does not forsake His people, and gives them laws for their good.

Ezra demonstrated great humility by identifying with the people, leading them as a nation in acknowledging and confessing their sins corporately. He makes no excuse for the people's sin and appeals to God's mercy for His undeserving people.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

Corporate confession of sin is certainly imperative in the growth of holiness not just as a church but also individually. Coming together to confess our sins is not only acknowledging God's glory and holiness, but also conceding our sinfulness and unworthiness.

We come together to acknowledge our disobedience and seek His forgiveness.

In corporate confession, we recognise our need for God's mercy as fallen people. We are reminded that we are not in it alone. Such is the beauty and blessing of a gathered church where each one of us plays a part in helping one another grow to be more like Christ. Let us exhort one another to: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal 6:2).

The Tax Collector and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

The two men showed two starkly different attitudes. The Pharisee, outwardly righteous, was prideful and haughty. One can imagine him sneering as he prays thinking, “thank God I’m not like all of them sinners.” The other man stands in a far corner, painfully aware that he does not deserve to stand before God. Yet, he pleads for mercy, trusting in a merciful God.

***God hears
the prayer of
the humble and
the contrite.***

Only the man who confesses his sinfulness before God and trusts in God’s mercy will be justified (that is, declared righteous) and saved. On the other hand, the man who pridefully trusts in his own righteousness will one day tremble before the only holy God in judgment.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

When we pray, we should remember and confess that we are all sinners who fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23) and are deserving of God’s wrath. Confessing our specific sins and asking God to reveal our hidden sin helps us to see ourselves rightly and to rid ourselves of pride or self-righteousness. This helps us to cry out sincerely to God for mercy, trusting that He forgives sin and makes us righteous.

***We do not
approach
God
presumptuously
but in humility.***

These lines from the song “Not in me” sum it up well: “O God be merciful to me, I am a sinner through and through; my only hope of righteousness is not in me, but only you.”

Paul, The Foremost Sinner, Finds Salvation (1 Timothy 1:12-17)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

God is the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God. He is also gracious and merciful and His grace to Paul was more than abundant. By His mercy, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, including Paul, who regarded himself as the greatest sinner of all. Christ Jesus also enable Paul to serve in ministries He had appointed him, considering him faithful.

This same Jesus who had forgiven Paul and used him in service, may also forgive us and enable us to serve Him faithfully. We just need to repent and to believe in Him for eternal life.

**God
showed
His mercy
for sinners by
sending Jesus to
live and die on our
behalf.**

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

God is worthy of our praise, thanksgiving and worship. God's grace is also greater than all our sins. He not only forgives us but He also enable us to serve Him as He appoints us in service. This should drive us to our knees with thankfulness to worship Him and to pray to Him, the eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God.

**We can
recognise
our sin and
honestly turn to
God in repentance.**

To Him be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen

Thanksgiving

“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.”

(2 Thess 1:3)

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is an expression of our inner gratitude towards someone and in the context of prayer, it is expressing our thankfulness for God's love, mercy and grace.

Thanksgiving enables us to focus on God alone who is able to turn our circumstances around for His glory and for our good.

Why is thanksgiving important in prayer? Apostle Paul tells us the importance of thanksgiving in our prayers: "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thess 5:18).

When we give thanks for what we do not have (or unanswered prayers), we are acknowledging God's sovereignty in our life without question or doubt, continuing to trust in Him and accepting what comes our way. As we give thanks for what we do have (or answered prayers), we are acknowledging God's provision and grace upon our life. When we give thanks to God, we are reminded of God's presence in our life. Nothing that we have is the result of our works, but only by the grace of God.

We come before God in prayer, with a heart of humility, expressing our gratitude and dependence on Him. Through thanksgiving in our prayers, we ought not to look at ourselves nor at our circumstances. Instead, we look towards God even in difficult situations when we cannot bring ourselves to utter a word of thanks. Thanksgiving should always be a part of our daily prayers to God as Paul has instructed the church in Philippians: "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." (Phil 4:6).

There are many things we can give thanks to God each day for providing us with all that we are, have and will be. Here are some things we can give thanks to God for: (1) who God is and the attributes of God; (2) the breath of life; (3) salvation in Christ Jesus; (4) the indwelling Holy Spirit who is our Helper; (5) the forgiveness of sins; (6) the trials of life; (7) all the things that we have been richly blessed with and not forgetting to give thanks to God for the wonderful family here in Grace Baptist Church.

All glory to God!

Sing Praises To Our Great God (1 Chronicles 16:8-36)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

King David wanted to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. It was a day of great thanksgiving when it returned, because it symbolised the return of God's presence with His people.

***God is great and
worthy to be praised!***

David's song extols God for His greatness, power and splendour and His wondrous, majestic work in all creation (1 Chron 16:24-33). He thanks God for :

- His character as a God who is sovereign, holy and just
- His choice and faithfulness, as He remembers His covenant forever, for a thousand generations (1 Chron 16:15-17)
- His constant presence (1 Chron 16:11), provision, protection and victories (1 Chron 16:19-22)
- His salvation and deliverance (1 Chron 16:35)

Most of all, he thanks God for His faithfulness for His steadfast love endures forever!

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

God is trustworthy and true to His Word and will fulfil His promises. He has a plan to restore this sinful world. Jesus, the Son of God, sent to the cross shows us His faithfulness. God knows and loves each of His own and nothing can separate us from His love.

We can thank God for His enduring love, the gift of salvation through Christ and for the indwelling of His Spirit to guide us. We can trust Him to keep all of His promises.

***We thank God for
His enduring love
and provision — for
our salvation and
our needs.***

He satisfies and offers hope, refuge and care to all who come to Him. God's children trust that He makes all things work together for our good and for His glorious purpose.

Give Thanks, For His Steadfast Love Endures (Psalm 136:1-26)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

The constant repetition of “His love endures forever” reminds us that God’s actions towards us are driven by his love for us; and more importantly we are reminded that’s God’s love is forever, it will never end.

God’s steadfast love endures forever — through generations and circumstances.

This has so many implications for us. God’s love endures through our hardships, our disobedience and our repentance and when we are most distant from him. God’s love is unchanging, the loving God that Abraham called upon, that Jesus submitted to and that Paul teaches about is the same God that loves us.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

We pray to a God that loves us. This assures us that He will always listen to our prayers and that He will respond in love for us. He has demonstrated that His enduring love for us is for our good. Hence there is no need to pray in fear, shame or, doubt.

To help us remember God’s enduring love, we should take the time to thank God for how he has blessed us, not just for recent things, or the things immediately around us, but also the things that have come before us and all of God’s faithfulness throughout creation.

We joyfully thank God for His faithfulness not only to us and also through the ages.

Thanks Be To God Who Saves (Jonah 2:1-9)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Jonah's prayer was taken from various psalms, and showed a knowledge of God and His Word. He knew that God made the sea and the dry land—yet in his rebellion, he attempted to flee from the presence of the Lord. But in his distress and as he was drowning, he remembered the Lord and cried out to Him. God heard and delivered him.

God is all-knowing, hears our cries in our distress, and saves.

Filled with gratitude and repentance, Jonah prayed from the psalms that so aptly described his situation and condition, reminding him that the Lord his God is omnipresent (Jonah 2:2), sovereign (Jonah 2:3), holy (Jonah 2:4), merciful (Jonah 2:6), abounding in steadfast love (Jonah 2:8) and the only One who can save and worthy of praise (Jonah 2:9).

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

Jonah turned to the Lord and His Word for help when he was in distress. Years of feeding on God's Word reminded him of who God is, what He has done and what He will do. God has given us many prayers of thanksgiving in the Bible to guide our prayers and help us align our hearts and will to His. Most of all, Scripture constantly points us to God, His saving grace and the sure hope we have in Him, naturally lead us to give thanks and be encouraged whatever our circumstances!

We thank God for graciously saving us from our deep distress of sin and death.

Thank God For Gospel Fruit (Colossians 1:3-8, 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Paul begins his letter to the church in Colossae by thanking God for them. He thanks God for two things: 1) their faith in Jesus and 2) their love for one another.

God's sovereignty extends to His provision of fruit in the lives of His people.

This faith and love are a result of the church's hope of life with God in heaven, which they heard through the gospel. Paul then reminds them that as the gospel bears fruit in them, so too the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing in the whole world! It bears fruit as faithful servants like Epaphras share the gospel with others.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

It is interesting that the gospel seems to have taken on a life of its own. It is the one bearing fruit and increasing, not Epaphras. God, with his word, brings about faith and fruit and we should be thankful for that! Only he is able to give us a new heart and a new spirit, removing our heart of stone and giving us a heart of flesh.

We thank God for how He is working in the life of others and causing the word to bear fruit.

God is the one who gives growth too! Let us thank God for the work he does in our church – bringing people to us and growing us in Christlikeness.

Thank God For Gospel Partners (Philippians 1:3-5, Ephesians 1:15-17)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

In these two short passages to different churches, we see Paul praying with joy. He could not stop giving thanks for the saints, not only for their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for other saints but also for their partnership in the gospel. Disciples of Jesus Christ not only wear their faith in their heart but also 'on their sleeves'.

God saves us and brings us into His family, where He continues to work in and through us.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

So often, when we give thanks, we tend to thank God for the blessings He showered upon us or the mercy and grace He bestowed on us. While it is right to do so, it can be inwardly focused. Paul reminds us that there is a bigger picture in God's economy, that is the work of the gospel. He expressed thankfulness that the believers are "walking the talk" - in their faith in the Lord Jesus and loving other saints and actively doing the work of the gospel.

We can thank God for gospel partners sent from our midst, and in other churches.

We, too, at Grace Baptist Church ought also to remember to express our thanks to God for those who are co-labouring together in the work of the gospel, including those in like-minded churches.

Joyful Thanks For Fellow Christians (1 Thessalonians 3:9-13)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Beloved, when was the last time you thanked God for the joy other Christians have brought you? In our passage, we see Paul doing so with great brotherly affection: Paul thanks God for the joy the brothers and sisters at Thessalonica bring him. Paul longs to see them in the midst of distress and affliction but is unable to; so he sends his co-laborer Timothy to “establish and exhort [them] in [their] faith (1 Thess 3:2). To Paul’s great encouragement, Timothy brings back good news of their “faith and love” (1 Thess 3:6).

God shows His love for us through His people.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

The joy that Paul has because of their faith and love leads him to thanking God in prayer. The joy also leads Paul to lifting them up in prayer, that they will continue to grow in faith and love. And he shares his prayer with them in 1 Thess 3:11-13.

Is there someone you can thank God for and encourage like this?

We can thank God for a brother or sister from GBC that has brought us joy.

Beloved, be encouraged and take heart how Paul prays. Think of a brother or sister at GBC to share this prayer with and thank God for the joy he or she has brought you.

Supplication



**“And so, from the day we heard,
we have not ceased to pray for you,
asking that you may be filled with the
knowledge of his will in all spiritual
wisdom and understanding ...”**

(Col 1:9)

Scripture calls us “in everything, by prayer and supplication, [to] let your requests be made known to God” (Phil 14:6).

Supplication



The word “supplication” comes from the Old Latin “*sub cos placo*” or “to humbly entreat”. It implies that we ask God from beneath or under in humility. We are God’s treasured possession but prayer should never be presumptuous or entitled. Our Father “is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him” (Hab 2:20). Only through Christ Jesus can we pray “with confidence [and] draw near near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

Children naturally make requests of their Heavenly Father. When we ask God to provide and intervene, we depend on Him. If we never make requests of Him, can it be we do not believe He cares for us, or He has the means to answer? Adoring a God who is both kind to give good gifts (Matt 7:9), and is able to provide according to His glorious riches (Phil 4:19) is a powerful motivation to pray.

However we can also ask wrongly to spend on our passions as immature children. What we want is not always good for us. Supplication can reveal idolatry and selfishness if all our asks serve ourselves or our desires are opposed to God’s good will. Praise God that He does not give us all we ask!

A better way to pray is to ask: what does our Father delight to give us through godly supplication (1 Jn 5:14)? Or, what does the Bible show us are good things to ask of God? Here are some of those good things:

1. Glory to God’s name (Ps 115:1)
2. The building up of the church (Matt 16:18)
3. Our spiritual fruitfulness and growth (Jn 15:16)
4. Faith to trust God to provide (Matt 6:31-33)
5. Material provision for Christian witness (Prov 30:8)
6. Sustenance for all the saints (Eph 6:18)
7. Wise and just secular Government (1 Tim 2:1-2)
8. The Gospel preached to all nations (Hab 2:14)

Perhaps we would know more of God’s goodness and glory if we asked it of Him. We can learn more about making godly prayer requests as we draw them from the weekly preaching of God’s Word. This is a virtuous cycle — the more our asks are shaped, the more God delights to bless, and the more we are shaped in asking. We are changed through prayer.

Moses Intercedes (Exodus 33:12-23)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Moses stands before the Lord and intercedes on Israel's behalf after the golden calf incident. Moses pleads boldly that God's presence goes with him and Israel, and that God reveal Himself and His glory to Moses.

The big idea is simple — as God's people, we can be bold as we seek God and draw near to Him. Moses pleads that God go with His people as they go. How else would the nations know we are His? That a Holy God would be with a sinful people - this calls for repentance, for atonement, for grace from God, and for God to be faithful - that He would forgive His people and be their God. And He does, and He is, and He gives His servant rest. This is the God whose glory we seek.

A holy God desires to be with His people — this calls for grace from God and repentance from us.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

This passage gives us a model of supplication in prayer.

1. We pray boldly as His children. As sinners saved by grace, we can draw near to God, and we can seek Him boldly.
2. We plead for mercy for our sin. Until Christ comes again, we struggle with our sin everyday. We pray for His mercy and grace as we turn and repent from our sin, and rejoice because of the assurance of our salvation.
3. We pray for His presence. We pray that His presence would be with us, for He is our God and we are His people. What a reassuring truth!
4. We long to see His glory. We pray for it, we desire it, and we look forward to it. What does that mean? It means we look to the person through whom His glory is fully revealed - Jesus Christ. May we pray to see Him as we seek Him, as we read His word, and as we live among His people.

We pray boldly as His children, and long to see His glory.

Hezekiah Turns To God

(2 Kings 19:15-19, 2 Chronicles 20:5-12)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Judah faced two “Great Security Crises”. The nation was threatened by the overwhelming armies, first from Moab and Ammon during Jehoshaphat’s reign and later by that of Assyria when Hezekiah was king. Thus, King Jehoshaphat called a fast and led his people to call on the Almighty God who had led them to possess the land and promised his help for the sake of his name. Similarly, in the face of Assyria’s threat, Hezekiah prayed to the God of Israel, declaring his sovereignty and power over heaven and earth and imploring him to act against the insults of Sennacherib, the Assyrian king.

***God is greater
than the
strongest kings
and nations.***

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

These two kings displayed faith in God and trusted in His willingness and ability to deliver his people. Their supplication, prompted by their dire and helpless situation, showed trust in God as their only hope. They not only presented their requests to Him, but also approached the Almighty God with adoration and praise as they confessed their weakness and distress —“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you. (2 Chron 20:12b)”

***We can turn to
God confidently
even when we are
feeling helpless.***

With thanks, they also remembered the covenant promises of the land, care and protection and many blessings in the past. They humbly and earnestly asked God to save them, for the sake of his good name and reputation. Do you have to wait for a crisis to pray?

The Psalmist Laments

(Psalm 88:1-18)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

This is a psalm of lament and even by that standard, it is a really sad lament because it is the only psalm where there is no explicit statement or declaration of hope at the end. The psalmist's deep state of despair is on full display as he expresses his grief and dire straits to the Lord daily even to the point of questioning his own existence since there was seemingly no answer from God for such a long time.

God may seem distant and silent, but He is still present, sees and hears us.

I sometimes wonder why this Psalm was ever in the Bible. However, within this psalm we can see that there is an implicit faith in God from the psalmist, who continually prays and engages with God despite the darkness and grief. Psalm 88 tells us that life can be difficult and despair can set in, but we can express our deep sorrow and disappointment to God, who knows us and is faithful to save us.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

This psalm teaches us three main things about prayer.

1. We can cry out to God in our deepest pain. This psalm shows us how to express our deep sadness and despair to God in a way that honours Him and remains honest about what we are going through.
2. We are to pray and engage with God continually especially in times of despair and grief. Verses 1,9 and 13 show us that the psalmist prays daily and unceasingly to God.
3. We can be confident that the God of our Salvation will save us. The psalmist begins with the acknowledgement that God is his God of Salvation (Ps 88:1). We can be assured in our prayers that God will save us from our despair because He has already done so through Jesus Christ, in whom we have salvation.

We can cry out to God in our deepest pain and grief.

Jesus Prays For His Disciples (John 17:1-26)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

In John 17, we see a precious picture of Christ praying to God the Father on our behalf, revealing his mission and work on earth. How good it is, that God reveals the heart of Christ, His love for us as He appeals on our behalf. Jesus' prayer not only shows his love for us, but also lays out His desires and design for us as Christians. We have been given to Christ, to know and glorify Him, to see the love of God and to be in unity with Him. He was sent that we might know Christ, and through Him, God the Father, and to become His.

Christ speaks of the perfect unity he has with God, and prays that we might share in that unity—with other believers as the Church, as well as with the triune God Himself.

Jesus reveals His love, desire and designs for Christians through His prayer.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

Through Jesus' prayer, we know that we are His treasured people, and can approach Him with the security of knowing that we belong to Him. We were made to know Him, and can pray with the confidence that through Christ, we can approach and know this Holy God.

We pray in line with Jesus' desires.

Jesus has revealed his desires for us—do we desire the same? We can pray for love and unity with our fellow believers, and for our love and knowledge of God to grow—with the confidence that God will complete this good work that He has begun in us.

Paul Prays For Growth (Ephesians 3:14-21, Philippians 1:9-11)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

God is the gracious Creator and Sustainer of our faith. In Paul's prayer, we read of how Christians are recipients of the sovereign God's grace. We are strengthened through the indwelling Spirit, so as to be rooted and grounded in love and may comprehend God's love.

More importantly, knowledge and love are interdependent - you can neither know and not love, nor love and not know. Living faith produces active love, that helps us "know" Christ's love beyond head knowledge.

God has also given us His Spirit to help us to know the extent of the love of Christ.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

“Prayer is the open admission that without Christ, we can do nothing. Prayer humbles us as needy and exalts God as wealthy.” This depiction of prayer by Bible teacher John Piper reminds us that prayer is a display of our humility and trust in God.

We pray for love and spiritual growth in us, because only God can give the growth.

When we pray for love and spiritual growth in us, we must pray for God's gracious initiative to produce, strengthen, and sustain a living faith, so that in our love for one another, we may deepen our comprehension of the love of God, leading to everlasting praise to God's glory.

Timothy Taught To Pray For Authorities (1 Timothy 2:1-7)

What stood out from the passage? What is the big idea?

Paul encourages Timothy to pray for all people, including kings and those in positions of authority. This is not only for our benefit — that we may have a “peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Tim 2:2b) — but also because it is good and pleasing in the sight of God. Paul links it to the heart of our Saviour, who desires all to be saved — all people, including kings and those in authority!

As Rom 3:23 reminds us, all have sinned. Thus, Christ Jesus is really the only mediator for all men, and “a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:6).

God is sovereign, even above all earthly authorities and Christ is the only mediator for men.

How does the big idea apply to prayer?

Paul encourages us to expand our prayer and petitions, to pray also for others and even our government. It helps to us to reshape our perspectives and helps us to remember that God is sovereign over all things. This is also God who loves the world that He gave His only begotten Son as Saviour (c.f. John 3:16).

We ought to also pray for all people, including for those in positions of authority.

When we remember who God is, we are also humbled by His might, and see ourselves rightly. We are saved only by His grace and not because we were more deserving than those around us. We now come humbly to God asking that more might come to know Him and His saving grace. Who can you be praying for today?

What's next?

We've come to the end of this devotional and it is our prayer that the past few weeks of praying have been encouraging and fruitful. We encourage you to keep up the habit and discipline of praying, and in your prayers, adore, confess, thank and present your petitions to God.

Here are some other ways to continue this habit of praying:

1. Use a devotional for your daily Bible reading

A daily devotional is a helpful tool to build the habit of Bible reading and praying. Consider also keeping a journal to record not just your thoughts and things you have learnt, but also your prayers. Over time, this is not only a good habit, but also a wonderful way of keeping track of how God has responded to our prayers.

2. Schedule regular prayer times with your care group members

At our care group meetings, we can pray for each other, and also for the needs of the church. We can also take back the prayer points from the weekly pastoral prayer and pray together as a group.

3. Commit to coming for the monthly prayer meeting

The monthly prayer meetings also help us to pray together as a church. At our prayer meetings, there is a time of sharing by different ministries, individuals and missionaries of the church. This is followed by a time of praying in smaller groups, and allows us to also meet other members of the church. These meetings expand our understanding of what God is doing in our church and beyond, and challenge us to pray alongside fellow Christians.

As we do so, may we also say with Paul, in Eph 3:20-21,

“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”