



281.890.1900
TheMETonline.org

Jones Road Campus
13000 Jones Road | Houston, TX 77070

Fry Road Campus | Hopper Middle School
7811 Fry Road | Houston, TX 77433

standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Matthew 6:5 (NIV)

In other words, if the only reason you pray is so others can know—

- How spiritual you are (or that)
- You're a great prayer (or that)
- You can use the *King James* language like nobody else

—He said: that's your "reward in full." God doesn't necessarily answer those kind of prayers right there.

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, {who knows our hearts and knows our struggles and our pains and the trials and sufferings and our joys and our ups and our downs—He} will reward you.

Matthew 6:6 (NIV)

He said: Don't try to *be* a big deal when you pray. Make *God* a big deal by doing it alone, one-on-one with God. The second thing He says about prayer is:

⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Matthew 6:7-8 (NIV)

A lot of us are familiar now with Middle East culture and the religion of the Middle East. We're familiar seeing wherever a Middle Easterner may be, who is very religious, will stop in the middle of the day and pray to Allah and face Mecca (and) up to five times a day.

When we were over in Africa and we were visiting with one of the pastors there—they have a mosque right outside of his house. Five times a day that [call-to-prayer siren] goes off—the people, who are of that faith, bow down wherever they are, and they start praying. God says: Don't be like that.

- It's not the quantity of your prayer
- It's not who sees you (and the fact that)
- Everybody knows that you can pray

—but rather it's the quality and to Whom you are praying. With that in mind Jesus said:

⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray: {—number one—}
" 'Our Father {Who is} in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today our daily bread. ¹² Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver

us from the evil one.’¹⁴ For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6:9-15 (NIV)

Here’s the first shocking thing that is overwhelming when Jesus talks about prayer; and that is: My Heavenly Father loves me.

1. MY HEAVENLY FATHER LOVES ME

Let’s say that together, because it even sounds strange if you’re not used to that concept. We’re going to say “My Heavenly Father loves me” together. Ready? My Heavenly Father loves me. God loves you. That’s overwhelming to think the number one reason that God wants you there is because He loves you. My Heavenly Father loves me—

- Not based upon what I’ve done for Him
- Not based upon how good I’ve been (or)
- ...how bad I have been (or)
- ...what my needs are

He loves me because He loves me.

Now when you grew up, you may not have had the best example of that. In fact, even as I look over my life (and) with my children—imperfect (at best) is what could be said about my love for my kids. Though I love them with all my heart, I can’t love them the perfect way that God loves me.

When we begin to think about how much God loves us, prayer doesn’t become:

- I’ve got to do this thing (or it doesn’t become)
- The bailout button (or)
- The emergency (or)
- God, help me!

—it becomes: My Heavenly Father loves me. My Heavenly Father wants me (actually) to be with Him.

The one thing that we do that really keeps us from understanding—the one thing I do that keeps me from understanding how much God loves me is I run into God’s presence and I do the verbal dump:

- Lord, this is what’s going on I need Your help with (and)
- We’re doing this over here (and)
- Lord, we need some help over there (and)
- God, send some more money (and)
- Lord, (you know) my kids and then my marriage (and)
- Da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da...(and)

I give Him the list and said: In Jesus’ name. Amen—I’m out of here and I’m working on everything.

I have a daughter and I love her to death. She's probably going to listen to this, so I'll probably get another phone call. But she'll call me up. In her world, it (just) isn't doing what it ought to do—this is wrong and that hurt. The whole time I'm saying: Honey, I...—she says: Dad, don't interrupt me. Honey, I...—Dad, don't interrupt me; I'm not through yet. Honey, I...(because I've got this wisdom—because I'm a little bit older than she is—and I've been down some of those trails before) and, Honey, I've got...—oh, Dad, just quit interrupting me...blah, blah, blah...okay, I feel better now, Dad. Bye. Click! [Pantomimes hanging up the phone]

Isn't that what prayer becomes sometimes?

- Father, these people don't like me.
- Father, this isn't going right at the job.
- Do You know what?—I'm hurt because of that.
- Do You know what else?—(you know)
- You said—You promised to give me and here are the things that I am going to need. God, there's all of them right there (and)
- Do You know what?—You didn't answer those last prayers. I'm (kind of) concerned about that. But I've got to go right now, in Jesus' name. Amen. Click!

Rather than doing what Jesus said—Jesus said: Pray like this, not out in public. There's nothing wrong with public prayer, but if the only reason you're praying is so someone else can go: Oh, wow, man, you can really pray great. Or if all you're doing is constantly again and again and again and again and again telling Jesus (telling God) what you want, what you want, what you want, what you want, what you want—God knows what you need, but—

- He knows more than what you need
- He knows what you really need
- He knows you need to be in His presence (and)

You need to breathe a sigh of relief. And before you focus on the mountain of stuff that has got you—

- Frustrated (and)
- Irritated (and)
- Anxious (and)
- Overwhelmed (and)
- Doubting (and)
- All that stuff

—you (just) need to go [demonstrates taking a deep breathe in and let it out:] Heavenly Father, "hallowed be your name."

We just sang: "*We run into Your embrace.*" (I don't know what y'all sang there at Cypress, but we sang some pretty good stuff here today.) "*We run into Your...we long for Your embrace.*" Do we really?

Prayer—you get to sit in your Heavenly Father's lap. Now that might seem a little uncomfortable if you didn't have any affection when you were growing up. But I'm going to tell you something that we need to get drilled down deep into our souls—because it is the bedrock that helps us get

through everything that is wrong and bad and hurtful and painful in this world: my Heavenly Father loves me! He loves me.

I've always struggled with that concept. I believe my Heavenly Father wants me to work for Him and wants me to do good, but it was difficult. It was (like) my Heavenly Father loves everybody else, but when it comes to me—if I mess up; He may not love me that much. Maybe it was because (you know) my parents were divorced (or whatever it is).

But when you're a kid you process stuff with a kid's brain. If you're not careful, you could take what happened to you when you were a kid and—all of a sudden—you're going to transfer that on God. Our Heavenly Father isn't anything like that. He loves us. He loves *you*. Right now He loves you right where you are no matter what you've done or what you're thinking about doing. You cannot stop your Heavenly Father from loving you, because the Bible says: "God is" what? "love." [1 John 4:16] He's loving you.

The greatest memory I have of when I was a child is when my dad would come home when we lived in Canada. This particular night was a snowy night. (I remember it as if it happened ten seconds ago.) My dad would walk through the door of that little ol' run-down apartment that we had. He still would be cold and the smell of the dayroom there on the Air Force base would be on his flight suit. I would run to my dad and jump up into his arms. We all would scream, "Dad's home!" and jump up there (I mean) body-slam him and he would catch me. I would put my hand inside that flight jacket and I would pull out five cellophane-wrapped bubble-gum balls that were all mine. You know what my dad knew? My dad knew my love language. When I jumped up in my dad's arms, my dad knew exactly what I needed. He knew I needed to know that he loved me. And [He] knew me so well that he knew exactly what I needed before I—what?—asked for it.

Your Heavenly Father loves you that much that He knows what you need—more than anything—is to jump up into his arms. "...Our Father [which] art in Heaven..." [Matthew 6:9 (KJV)]

1(A) PRAYER IS A RELATIONAL CONVERSATION WITH OUR FATHER

That's what it is. It's not just a list of:

- God, do this and do that (and)
- Help me do this and do that (and)
- Make me proud—let me make You proud of me (and)
- Blah, blah, blah

It's a relational conversation with your Heavenly Father. Look what He says (He says), "...Hallowed be thy name." [Matthew 6:9 (KJV)]

Now here's how much God loves you. He knows everything about you—

- Even the stuff you don't want to talk about
- Even the places you don't want to go in your heart

He knows they're there. He never keeps you from coming to Him. There are some things in our lives that we think we have together. And there are some things in our lives that we know we

don't have together; and we don't want to talk about those things with God. This little, "hallowed be thy name" is a simple cry of helpless trust.

I have a neighbor who happens to be a staff member here too, Bob Butterfield [*Facilities Director*]. Bob is the most organized, consistent, do-it-yourself, best neighbor you would ever possibly have. Bob, when he was off [work], built a gazebo in his backyard a couple years ago and plastered it. It was like a house back there. And his yard is always perfect.

So, finally, someone had mercy on me and said: Let me come and do your yard for you, because you're never going to—that's never going to happen. But then Bob saw my garage a couple weeks ago. He said: Man, your yard is great; do you want some help on your garage? I closed the garage door.

That's what it's like; we say: God, I've got this yard together. Look at this! But, God, look at the garage; look at that. Your Heavenly Father wants you to know that He knows that you can't get it together. And it's okay not to be able to get it together. But if you let Him, He will get it together and go in and clean it for you. A lot of times we don't come to our Heavenly Father because we don't want Him to see the garage. He already knows the garage is there. He knows the mess that it's in. He is the only One [who] has the ability to clean it up.

So [this scripture] says: God, You're holy; I'm not. My heart is for You and my heart is good; but it's cluttered with a bunch of stuff. God, come and fix what's so cluttered up.

Prayer is a relational conversation with your Heavenly Father.

1(B) OUR HEAVENLY FATHER HAS NO LIMITATIONS

"...Our Father [which] art"—where? In where? Texas? No, even bigger than that: heaven—"in heaven." [*Matthew 6:9 (KJV)*] He's above everything. He has no limitations. Everything: He is in total control of.

In fact, all throughout the Bible you will find different names for God—especially in the *Old Testament*. The name that Jesus gives Him for us in the *New Testament* is *Abba Father*, [which means] Daddy. Behind Daddy is a whole history of what Daddy's been doing, long before we were on this earth. God gave Himself names to teach people who He was like, usually after an incident where God would do something great for His people:

- The first name for God was *Elohim*, which means creator out of nothing. There was nothing and all of a sudden God said, "let there be light" [snaps fingers] light happened. You know: Let there be animals and plants—there was none of that. Oh yeah: Let's have some air and some water; and let there be Texas. And then it was the end. God takes nothing and He makes something out of it. So you have a God—
 - When you say: I have nothing
 - God says: That's all I need. All I need is nothing and I'll make something out of nothing.

Maybe you were told you were nobody; you'll never be nothing—bad English; great theology for God. Yeah you *are* going to be somebody and I can do anything with nothing.

- Another name that God has is *Adonai*: the Lord who is in charge (the Lord who's in charge).
 - Your boss isn't in charge; God's in charge.
 - I'm not in charge of the church; God's in charge.
 - The President's not in charge of the country; God is in charge of everything.Even when you think He's not in charge, He's in charge. He is the Lord. So if you think somebody who is in charge of you isn't treating you very well, just go to *Adonai* [and say:] Father, be in charge, be in charge.
- *El Elyon*: sovereign, most-high God. He is the greatest court of appeal—ever. There is no jurisdiction beyond His jurisdiction.
- *El Shaddai*: God Almighty; [that is,] He has the last say-so. Whatever's going on in your life, you think others control—huh uh—*El Shaddai* controls that.
- *Jehovah Sabaoth*: the Lord of hosts of all the angel armies. You don't have to fear anything, because your Heavenly Father is the Lord of all of the angelic hosts.
- *Jehovah Jireh*: the Lord will provide. Can Daddy provide? You better believe He can. How do you know? Well his name's *Jehovah Jireh*. Even when you can't see it, He knows it's there and He's bringing it to you.
- *Jehovah Nissi*: the Lord is my victory.
- *Jehovah Rapha*: the Lord who heals you.

That's who our Heavenly Father is and Jesus said: When you pray, go to your Father who is in heaven.

Our Lord has a name too. His name's Jesus. *Jesus* means **salvation**. Jesus, for us, means authority. How can we get to God the Father?—through God the Son. Because we're in the Son, we have salvation. We've been adopted into God's family. Because of that (now) we're in Christ; and to be in Christ is to be with God. If we are in Christ and with God, we can ask anything in Jesus' name.

Listen to what the Bible says in *John 15:16 [NIV]*:

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. {He said (look): I'm going to let you in on eternity. You're going to be doing some things that are never ever going to go away.} Then the Father will give whatever you ask in my name.

Listen, when we say “in Jesus’ name” it’s not Bible fairy-dust that we sprinkle on stuff so it will come true. We’re going to say it because I am in Christ (and)

- By the authority that we have in Christ, this is what I pray (and)
- I pray in Jesus’ name because of—
 - Who I am now (and)
 - What He has done (and)
 - What access I have

You don’t always have to end your prayer “in Jesus’ name” if you think that’s magical fairy-dust. That’s more for us to be reminded: Now, Lord, I know You hear this, because it’s in Jesus’ name [and] because I am in Christ.

Let me ask you something. With all the promises we have in the Bible and a Heavenly Father who loves us, don’t complain about your problems, claim His promises.

1(C) DON’T COMPLAIN ABOUT THE PROBLEM; CLAIM HIS PROMISES

When we come into the presence of God, do we just bellyache and whine and cry?

It’s okay to bellyache a little bit and whine and cry. You’re a child. I’m a child. We’ve had children. Who else are we going to bellyache and whine and cry to? But then after that—after you’ve had a little bit of venting—go on to some claiming for heaven’s sake. Everybody has problems. Everybody likes to verbalize what those problems and frustrations are. But after awhile—if you have a friend (and)

- All they do is negative all the time (and)
- All they do is vent and complain (and)
- They’re angry (and)
- They’re bitter about stuff (and)
- They never claim the promises of God to get on with their healing

You probably don’t like spending a lot of time with them—do you?

So when we’re in the presence of God, go ahead and vent, go ahead and let God know how you feel, because—that’s okay—He is our daddy. But then say: Now, Dad, You said....

How many of you have kids [who] ever reminded you of what you said? Dad, you—what?—promised. We’ve got one [child] that I’ve got to say very clearly: Now I’m not promising, but if the moon and stars line up right, maybe. I even get that one nailed on me.

You promised, God. This is what You promised. You said you are [going to do this] and now, Daddy, I’m just waiting for You to take care of these things. I just want to rest now and be revived by Your presence.

That’s what we need to be doing in the presence of God. Don’t complain about the problem, claim His promises. Look at *Matthew 7, verses 9 through 11*.

⁹ “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

¹⁰ Or if he asks for fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then,

though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,
how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those
who ask him!

Matthew 7:9-11 (NIV)

Now, if you're a father, and your son or daughter were hungry; how many of you would throw a rattlesnake on them? Let me see your hands. (Does Bryan [Rose, *Fry Road Campus Pastor*] have his hand up there at Fry Road? Let me know.) You wouldn't do that, would you? You would say: That's ridiculous! And if you, being evil, still know how to do good things—oh, my heavens!—our Heavenly Father:

- In whom there is no shadow of turning
- In whom there is no sin, there is no darkness
- Whose yes is yes
- Who has never gone back on His word
- Who has always kept His promises
- Who has given us His Holy Spirit
- Who has sealed us with the Spirit
- [Who] has given all these promises

How much *more* will He give to us? (How much more?) And even in my imperfect state, I know how to love my children. How much more in His perfect being does He know how to love us?

The next thing Jesus said is we ought to pray because—

2. WE NEED TO KNOW AND DO GOD'S WILL

your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:10 (NIV)

Let me tell you what this is; it's no mystery. Do you know what God's will is? God's will is that through my life—

- My sweat, blood and tears
- My happy times
- My sad times
- The times when I'm emotionally high (and)
- ...emotionally low
- When things are going right (and)
- ...it seems like everything is going wrong

God's will is that I live that life the way that He wants me to live it in every one of those situations. I am to be like Jesus in my life. And as I'm like Jesus in my life, I follow God.

I'm alive for one reason today. Do you know why God let me get up today and to breathe and to have my wife by my side and enjoy all the things that I'm enjoying right now? Because I exist to serve Him, no matter what happens in my life.

Job says: Even though He slay me, yet I will serve Him. [*Job 13:15* (paraphrased)]

- Even though I have difficulties
- Even though I'm not perfect
- Even though I still have some hang-ups
- Even though I still do things that I shouldn't be doing
- Even though I get sick
- Even though I might have cancer
- Even though I lose my job

I'm going to serve God because this is going to be part of His will for my life that I know that nothing could ever thwart. So I'm going to trust Him and His kingdom is going to come no matter what happens to me— "Thy will be done." [*Matthew 6:10b (KJV)*]

The next thing that I want you to see is that we all need God's provision.

3. WE NEED GOD'S PROVISION

Give us this day our daily bread.

Matthew 6:11 (KJV)

Why would God ask us to ask Him for stuff He already knew we needed? Isn't that interesting? If God knows everything (and He does) and He knows we need to eat (and we do), why does He ask us to ask Him? **Prayer is something we need.** God doesn't need to be told; we need to tell Him.

You know, here in a couple months, that favorite time of the year is coming—and it's not Christmas—it's tax time. And you're going to get with your CPA (or whoever does your [taxes]) or you're going to get out *TurboTax*; and the one thing that you're looking for is that box that says: How many dependents are you claiming? The thing is, after awhile your kids get grown and gone. And then sometime in their 30s—we hope—are on their own! But as long as they're on your payroll, you get to—what? I get to claim them as a dependent and some of my taxes go down.

Well let me tell you something about God's kids. They're never grown, gone and own their own. They're always on the payroll. They're always going to Him for what they need. Do you know why?—because we are dependents. We're our Heavenly Father's dependents! And when we don't ask, and we don't let Him know, we are saying to God:

- I'm independent.
- I'll do it myself, God.
- I will take care of this.
- I'm smart enough.
- I'm talented enough.
- I've got a good job (enough).

Let me tell you why you're smart, talented and have a good job; because your Heavenly Father gave it to you. He gave it to you.

And do you know what? I've given my kids things before they haven't been very grateful for—and guess what I did?—I took them back. I said: Now, when you get a little more grateful you can have it. Boy, it's just like that [snaps his fingers] they get grateful.

And many times we don't know what we have (and)—

- How graciously we have been treated (and)
- How merciful and kind our Heavenly Father is

—until what we have is gone and then, all of a sudden [while kneeling]: Oh, dear God—Jesus, please, please, please.

Every day that we have on this sod—before we go to heaven—is a gift from God. And God, I need these things. I'm just doing this to keep me humble and to keep me grateful; because the moment I'm not, I'm proud and arrogant and [think] I could do it on my own.

We need God's provision. Do you know why else we need it?—because we worry all the time (we worry). Our nation is in a panic attack right now. Any little thing—

- The stock market fluctuates (you know)
- Take the terror alert to whatever rainbow color out there that freaks everybody out
- Everybody gets searched to get on the plane.
- There was this attack over there (and)
- We've got this [terrorist] cell over here (and)
- We're just—
 - All wadded up tighter than a golf ball (just)
 - Anxious
 - Teeth grinding
 - Can't sleep at night
 - Don't have enough to retire
 - What's going to happen to the market?
 - Am I going to have a job?
 - What's going on with my kids?

—frustrated to the hilt!

And when we pray, and we get in our Heavenly Father's presence, that stuff just melts away. Do you know that today is the tomorrow that I was worried about yesterday?

3(A) TODAY IS THE TOMORROW THAT I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YESTERDAY

Did you wake up? Did the sky fall while we were sleeping? Did gravity get released and we're floating around with no control at all? No!

- *Jehovah*, who created out of nothing
- *Adonai*, who is the Lord over everything is
- *Jehovah Jireh*, [who] is going to provide the things that we're worried about (that) are going to happen tomorrow

So the lesson is:

3(B) TODAY IS THE PROOF THAT MY HEAVENLY FATHER WILL TAKE CARE OF TOMORROW

And guess what? If you don't die today, God's going to take care of today. And if you die today, you just get the bigger promotion anyway. You'll never be worried again!

4. WE ALL NEED HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Verse 12:

Forgive us {of} our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
Matthew 6:12 (NIV)

Golly—you know what?—this is huge! (Because) our biggest problem and our greatest enemy is sin. It's our greatest enemy. It's our biggest problem.

4(A) SIN IS OUR GREATEST ENEMY AND GREATEST PROBLEM

We need a cleansed conscience for a sense of peace and rest with God and man. And so sometimes when we go into our heavenlies, we don't want to go into our Father's presence because we've done something wrong.

When your kids, after school or they've been gone for a little bit [and] they come back to the house; you can look at them and you can tell—what have you been doing?—this isn't normal behavior here. And what are they carrying around?

- They're carrying around the fear that you'll find out what they've done.
- They're carrying around the guilt of what they've done.

Now, when you know that, why do you pry into their business? Why do you poke around in their lives? Because you know if that thing goes on—

- It will be unhealthy for them (and)
- They will not be the person that God's designed them to be (and)
- They'll get involved in some kind of habits that are going to be destructive (and)
- They're going to be distancing themselves from you because they're hiding.

So you poke around.

Do you know why?—that's what God does with us. The minute we walk in—there's never a time that He does not want us there—and the first thing that we'll know is: something is wrong if I don't feel comfortable in my Father's presence. And your Father can see that (just like you can see it in your kids). So He pokes around—He knows—He's just poking. Oh, there's the sore spot.

And do you know what you do?—you confess. If we say, "forgive us {of} our debts" that implies confession.

4(B) ASKING FORGIVENESS IMPLIES CONFESSION

That means: God, I just blew it here and I'm so sorry.

He says: I forgive you.

You say: But...

He says: There [are] no buts; I forgive you. Now let's go on to more important things like—

- How much I love you (and)
- How special I think you are (and)
- How much I believe you're going to do in this life (and)
- How you're going to serve Me

You say: But God...

[He says:] There [are] no buts; I forgave you.

If we don't get that, there's emotional clutter in our life that begins to build a wall between us and God.

Those of you who have had kids, who have gone off and have done super-bad things, you remember when they started building that wall. They wouldn't let you take those bricks down. They kept building the wall until they finally had separated themselves and gone out and hurt themselves.

God says: Don't build that wall; let me take those bricks down. Because if you [don't]—

- If you have the emotions of fear
- If you have the emotions of guilt

—then it's going to distort your concept of God. Come into God's presence; let Him alleviate you of that guilt.

4(C) FORGIVENESS RELEASES WHAT OTHERS OWE US

Verse 14:

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Matthew 6:14 (NIV)

Now a lot of people have problems with that verse [and wonder]: You mean God won't forgive me? Here's the teaching of that verse: It's impossible to forgive unless you've first been forgiven. Hurt people—do what?—hurt people! People who've not been forgiven don't forgive other people! But people who have been forgiven and understand that the greatest debt that

they're ever going to have is their debt to God—they know: Oh, what you did to me is nothing compared to what I owe God.

4(D) MY GREATEST DEBT IS TO GOD

When you get home, *Google* nationaldebt.com [US Debt Clock.org]; I did before I came over earlier this morning. And at that time (around 7:00 this morning) we owed—you ready?—\$13,569,964,477,877 and it spins about this fast when you watch it [demonstrates with index fingers spinning rapidly around one another].

Now, what about us? There's a debt we owe. And that thing spins and spins and spins and spins. And even when we're not cognizant of it, it's still spinning—it's still adding up.

Our Heavenly Father says: Forgiven! Your debt's clear.

[We say:] But it's still spinning.

[God says:] Forgiven! I'm going to cover it all in the blood of Jesus Christ.

And then somebody does one thing to us—one thing [and we say]: You owe me for the rest of your life. I'm never ever, ever going to release you from this debt.

And the thing is: they could [not] care less; because they're going to go on their merry way. We're the ones [who] are in bondage; because they owe us and they owe what they can never repay.

And so if I am forgiven, the proof is that I can forgive you. The proof is—have you heard this saying? *I just can't forgive them*. Here's how it's translated: I just *won't* forgive them—because you *can*—because you have been forgiven of so much more.

My greatest debt is to God. Here's an illustration out of the life of Joseph (and then we have to close her in a few minutes).

"But Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid.'..." [*Genesis 50:19 (NIV)*] Do you remember? His brothers sold him into slavery—lied to his father; said he was dead. He gets shipped off into Egypt. [Later] he becomes a success (you know); accused of adultery, which he didn't do; thrown into jail. All of a sudden—boom!—now he finds himself Number Two in all of the kingdom of Egypt. His brothers come back because they're broke and they're out of food. And he finally reveals himself after a series of incidents that are (just) stuff that movies are made out of. And he shows them who he is. And at the end of their father's life, they think Joseph is going to kill them because their dad's dead now. And so they come to him and throw themselves on his mercy.

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Genesis 50:19-21 (NIV)

Because he was able to forgive, he had this intimacy with God. Through that he knew: “Thy will be done” “Thy kingdom come” [*Matthew 6:10 (KJV)*] and even through—

- The pain of life (and)
- The rejection of family members (and)
- The lying of family members

Joseph released that and could see God’s purpose in all of that so that his family ultimately—not his family only—but all of Israel was going to be saved.

Some of God’s deepest and greatest work in your life is going to come when people hurt you. Don’t lose sight of what God wants you to do: Forgive them; I’ve got purpose working in all of this pain. Or He’s not God, and let’s just go home. But He’s God! And He can even overcome human sin.

So, if you’re not forgiving somebody—guess what? Ready? Here it is—you can’t hear God.

How in the world could have Joseph ever heard God and what God’s purpose was, if he was so mad at his family that all he could see was rage and revenge? He would be an angry, bitter, vitriolic person. But because he could release that, he had intimacy with God; and he could hear what God was doing through all of that.

Forgive whoever it is that’s stopping your ears up from hearing God. And then finally—

5. WE NEED GOD’S PROTECTION

And this is the final finally. (Those of you who are at Cypress, wake up Bryan and tell him: It’s almost ready to go.)

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

Matthew 6:13 (NIV)

Prayer starts with God [and] finishes with God. The problem is never the problem; it’s only another reason to go to God.

What he is talking about here is that: I am going to tempt you. *James* says: God—let me rephrase that because that was wrong—God doesn’t tempt anybody. You are going to be tempted. But when you’re tempted, don’t say: God did this to me. God doesn’t tempt any person. [*James 1:13* (paraphrased)]What the prayer is here is: God, help us avoid the danger and the trouble of sin.

5(A) OUR DESIRE IS TO AVOID THE DANGER AND TROUBLE OF SIN

There is unrecognized temptation out there—unrecognizable; because we have an enemy:

- His name is the devil.
- He is the deceiver.
- He’s the liar.
- He’s always working his tricks and his trade on us.

He said: Lord, just deliver me from unrecognized temptation.

When temptation's recognized—guess what happens?—you can resist it (or you should anyway). But when it is unrecognized, you're going to fall into it. It is a trap. It is a snare. And that's what the devil does. Temptation isn't always evident. There are times that we think we're right, and we do what we thought was right. But we were so caught up in emotional feelings and we were so caught up in the moment that we really didn't hear from God. Pride comes in and sneaks up on us. And then afterwards we look back on that and we say: You know what? I was wrong. (I was wrong.)

So this is a prayer to keep us humble: God, keep our eyes open. Don't let me fall into the condemnation and the snare of the devil. And in order to do that you have to submit to God's Word.

5(B) I MUST SUBMIT TO GOD'S WORD

"Watch and pray so that you do not fall into temptation. The Spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Matthew 26:41 (NIV)

Watch and pray. Come into your Heavenly Father's presence.

Now, when's the last time you enjoyed praying? When's the last time that you couldn't wait till your daddy came home? (And)

- You got to jump into his arms (and)
- You put your hand in his pocket (and)
- He spoke your love language and encouraged you to keep on going

I want you to know your Heavenly Father wants to do that for you every day [and] every time that you need Him.

There is nothing worse, I think, than being an orphan—

- That's why we build the orphanages.
- That's why we help children all around the world.

A child without a dad is a lost soul. You're not orphaned unless you're outside of Christ. And if you're outside of Christ, then that relationship I just described with your Heavenly Father, you're never going to have. In fact, *Ephesians 2* says we are all children of Satan down here in this wicked world, until Christ came and died for us so that we could be adopted into the family of God.

And some of us need to go to the court of justice—the cross of Jesus Christ—and have the adoption papers signed so that we can go to our Heavenly Father. And if that's you, I want to lead you in a prayer now. So let's all bow our heads and close our eyes. If you've never known Christ as your personal Savior, if you want God in heaven to be your Heavenly Father; then you silently say this prayer as I say it aloud and it goes like this:

Dear God, I want in Your family. I want You to be my Heavenly Father. I want to run into Your embrace. Forgive me of my sin. I trust Christ and Christ alone to get me right with You.

And for the rest of us, God, help us to love You the way that You say You love us, God—unconditionally, with all of our hearts. Jesus, teach us to pray like You prayed so that we can have a relationship—a deep one—and great confidence from that relationship with our Heavenly Father. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Lead Pastor: Dr. Sal Sberna

The MET
Metropolitan Baptist Church
13000 Jones Rd
Houston, TX 77070

Sermon Transcript Ministry
resource@TheMETonline.org

Even his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?"

John 6:60
(*New Living Translation*)

Legend:

(**words in parentheses**) = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea

[**words in square brackets**] = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher

{**words in curly brackets within indented quote**} = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*