Today, we continue in our series on prayer. Last week, we discussed the importance of meditating in, remembering, and recognizing who it is that we are praying to: Our Heavenly Father, His majesty and magnificence, His sovereignty and willingness to hear from His children. So last week, we focused on the “who” in prayer. This week, we focus on the “what.” What is prayer? What makes it so vital to the life of a believer? What makes prayer so vital to life, period? So let’s begin.

What is prayer? Prayer is communication, cooperation, connection, and combat! In prayer, God lends His attention to His children. It is more than words flung toward the sky. In fact, it’s more than words, per se, period. In his book *How to Pray*, C. S. Lewis tells us prayer is more than words. He wrote, “Simply to say words is not to pray; otherwise a team of properly trained parrots would serve as well as men.” When we sit with someone we love and talk, we chat and listen and tell stories—but it’s more than that. It’s about the connection, about sharing space, sharing time. Prayer is about the connection.

In [John 15](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John15%3A1-10&version=NKJV), a passage I have preached on many times, Jesus teaches us about the abiding connection. [John 15:5-10](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John15%3A5-10&version=NKJV), our Father is glorified in the abiding--in the connection. In [Ephesians 6:18](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians6%3A18&version=NKJV), Paul tells us to pray in the Spirit. This, again, speaks to the biding. To “pray at all times” also tells us that our Father is listening at all times. Each time we pray is a chance to behold Him and be held by him. It is the God-word orientation of our hearts rather than the automatic movement of our lips. Prayer is the opportunity to be still and know that He is God We don’t have to impress God with our words (God be praised!). He doesn’t care how much “Christianese” we know. In fact, prayer is just an honest heart bearing itself before our trustworthy Father. But Jesus cannot be an occasional guest in the heart of the believer. We must abide!

Family, listen. We cannot expect growth in grace without prayer. Prayer is the privilege of the redeemed ([James 5:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James5%3A16&version=NKJV)).In prayer, we embrace our relationship with God as Father. In prayer, we allow ourselves time with the one who made us, keeps us, dies for us, rose for us, and is coming again for us.

Church, remember this: God is better at listening than you are at talking. He hears the heart. That’s the comfort in abiding. Jesus knows me; this I love ([Jude 20](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jude1%3A20&version=NKJV) ). Prayer is an investment into the Kingdom as the Kingdom invests in me, in you, in *every* heart that prays.

We’ve discussed the “who” and the “what.” Now we address the “when” ([1 Thessalonians 5:17](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1thessalonians5%3A17&version=NKJV)). Church, we are people of faith. Prayer is the most basic expression of faith ([Hebrews 11:6](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews11%3A6&version=NKJV)). When we pray, we are joining in cooperation with God to accomplish our will. “Your Kingdom come, you will be done,” Jesus taught us to pray. Cooperation on our behalf in the mission of God is central to prayer. In [1 Corinthians 3:9](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Corinthians3%3A9&version=NKJV), Paul gives us an image of prayer. We are God’s fellow workers—working with Him but just for Him. Prayer is the cooperative foundation for living a faith-filled life with God on Mission. For His Mission, prayer is communication, connection, cooperation, and combat! The power of prayer was not given to win comforts but to wield as a weapon.

We’ll talk about this understanding over the next couple of weeks. Meanwhile, know that we have been given two offensive weapons in our spiritual arsenal: The sword of the Spirit and the power of prayer. Jesus responded to every attack of Satan with Scripture. So let me ask this question: Does our prayer focus on our emotion, our negative feelings, or on the character of God, on His assurances and promises? Does our prayer focus on His character over our condition? We must pray based on the truth of scripture: We must hide His word in our hearts. I found a report online that there were 83,100,000 searches for prayer through Google. Interest abounds. These seekers confirmed how important it is to learn how to pray, who to pray to, and what strength prayer can provide. What a blessing that we have those answers. What a blessing that we have Jesus Christ. HE is our answer. Lord, teach us to pray!