

Teach Us To Pray

Part 2 of 5 | Jordan Biel | Rock of Grace Kinsman Campus | 08.14.22

Today, we continue a 5 week series on the Lord's Prayer and man, this series is gonna be AWESOME! I'm so excited to hear what GOD is going to do and we are going to LEARN and more importantly, what we are going to EMBRACE and live out, not just learn, amen?

Let's Pray

God we pray that your Holy Spirit would move aside my thoughts...

Lord's Prayer Passage: **MT 6:9-12**

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. ESV

Jesus, as we said last week, is teaching us literally how to pray - what to say. Last week, we talked about the different between God's Holy Kingdom and God's enemy, satan and his kingdom. I want to put up a slide I put last week that zooms way out to define who is God, who is man and who is satan. The reason for that is that it gives us an understand we NEED if we are going to live out this pray of bringing God's kingdom to earth. We can't bring something we don't understand. We need to know who is God, what is His Kingdom like and why is the world we live in so messed up at times? Lastly, what are we to do about it.

Who is God?

Artist | King | Father

Who is Satan?

Poser | Intruder

Who is Man?

Image of God (Art) | Governor/Steward | Child/Heir

SLIDE

The battle we're in is real. Too many Christians don't realize it but there's a battle for your life, a struggle between good and evil, God and the devil. We said last week that Satan is a poser, an

intruder, a liar and a thief. Only Creator God is worthy to be worshipped but Satan wants to be worshipped and because of that, he tries to get revenge at God by attacking you because you are His special creation according to Ephesians.

The battle you feel in life is often a signal to you of the eternal reality in this side on the screen - the good and evil battle that rages until the devil is thrown into the lake of fire for good in the coming age. Until then, we content for healing, for restoration, to live in the victory of what Jesus paid for!

Jesus' death and resurrection was to restore you completely. He restores you to a good relationship to Father God by healing your heart and He is able to heal you completely including your body.

We see this most obviously in the life of Jesus healing the sick but it's important to remember that the disciples took the command of Jesus seriously and went town to town, preaching the Gospel and healing the sick and delivering people from unclean spirits.

Did Jesus say this would happen? Yes!

LK 2 Jesus says "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon Me because He has anointed me to bring good news, to bind up the broken hearted ..." He came to heal and restore what was broken in mankind.

I want to reiterate a verse we read last week from John, chapter 10. Notice what Jesus said in verse 10.

JN 10:7-10

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

When Jesus says that He is going to give us an abundant life, I simply can't imagine that means a life of physical pain. He even expounds on this idea in John 14 when He is teaching about the miraculous and He says "Greater things will you do in my name because I go to the Father..."

In MT 28 and in MK 16

Mark 16:15-19

"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up

serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

¹⁹ So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God

Ask yourself this question... would Jesus say “Heal the sick” if He didn’t think it was possible?

Of course not. He commands us to do things that we are able to do - enabled by Him and His power.

when we see Jesus send His disciples out, He doesn’t just say “Preach the Gospel” He also says “Heal the sick”

We’ve been given the authority to forgive and heal by Jesus Himself. We are to be His ambassadors, His image on the earth, His art, steward & child who represents Him to the world.

Remember - who is man? YOU are the image of God, the steward...

Philippians 1:27

“Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. 28 Don’t be intimidated in any way...” NLT

Ephesians 2:6 tells us that we are “seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...”

We are “seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly places” and that verse does not just mean “there and then.” It means “here and now.”

Now I can imagine that some of you think I am embellishing. Maybe you’re thinking “Pastor, listen don’t you think you’re taking this a little too far. I mean lets not get carried away here. Jesus was the Son of God and only He was able to heal the sick and preach the Gospel like that.”

Well then lets look at what Jesus Himself said...

Jesus said in

JN 14:10-14 I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

¹² “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.
¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

When we pray, we're told to ask for His Kingdom to come to earth - for His health, His resources, His love and peace to enter our broken world and change it!

STORY of HEALING>

The rest of that passage we read a moment ago says this ...

Mark 16:19-20 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.”

When the disciple Mathew writes about this moment, he says it like this:

MT 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Like I said last week, we either believe the whole Bible and the entirety of it's message or we don't. Why not believe all of it!? Why not believe what Jesus said was actually true!?

“I'll take the Prius today” lol

So many believers are living their life not knowing the power of God that lives within them! It'd be like having a supercharged sports car - a Bigati or Lamborguini in your driveway - walking by it every day and being like “Meh, I'll take the Prius today.” Really?

The Kingdom of God coming is not just miracles but it's also showing mercy, empathy & kindness.

Kingdom Coming Testimony >

(Jessie and Jimmy and their employee)

A friend of mine told me about one of their employees going through a really hard time at home. They noticed she just wasn't herself so they offered to stop and talk to her about it. She told them what was going on and my friend, a Christian, offered to give her some paid time off. This is after praying for her and consoling her and BEING JESUS to her.

The kingdom coming to earth isn't always physical miracles. It's like we said earlier - being merciful, showing kindness and empathy, being a good listener and demonstrating that love of Jesus.

Being a citizen of heaven and praying “Your kingdom come and Your will be done is about truly DOING what Jesus said to do.

What if you could see miracles like Jesus did and see God’s powerful hand at work all around you? What if you left the *empty* life that Paul described and started living the *full* life - the life aimed at Heaven?

What if you started to pray for the sick and command the intruder to leave?

What if you and I believed what Jesus promised?

What if we began to heal the sick and expect miracles to take place?

What is a miracle?

A miracle is when Heaven’s reality invades earth’s problem. Jesus taught us to pray “Your Kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” In heaven, people are healed, people are free from fear and anxiety, people are filled with joy and wonder, and people are pain-free! People love Father God!

You have that power and message within you! All you have to do is activate it - believe it - walk in this truth!

God is wanting a people of faith – people who will be all that He’s designed them to be – the LIGHT in a dark world – the SALT in a media-overloaded bored society. God is calling YOU to be a citizen of heaven resident here on earth.

What if your life can be much more meaningful than you ever thought!?

What if your life can be fulfilling and full of joy, even in the midst of struggles? What if what you did nine to five affected eternity? Is that possible? What if the search for life’s meaning is less about success at work 9 to 5 and then enjoying Netflix in the evening - and more about bringing the Kingdom of God everywhere you go!

Some people travel to America then spend years waiting for their “papers” declaring that they are now welcomed citizens, giving them the rights to every opportunity available to American citizens. Until they get those papers, they are left out of many privileges and opportunities. Chances at employment, education and many other things we take for granted are simply out of reach for them. They’re just not able to check that box on their application confirming their citizenship. And that alone, keeps them from so many of the joys designed for US citizens.

I want to propose that Our love for others and our actions that bring people closer to Christ serves as our “papers” – our passport – it proves that we belong to another land in another place, Heaven. Jesus said to His disciples “They will know that you are mine by your love for one another.”

This “love” he was speaking about wasn’t just the worldly understanding of the world “love.” It was a heavenly love. A sacrificial love. A love that compels us to pray for the sick and believe for healing. A love that motivates us to pray for the lost in our community and not stop until we see them saved. A love that moves us past the superficial kindness of a cliché “how are you?” and into the realm of “God put you on my heart and I just wanted to see how you’re really

said “loving God and loving people” pretty much sums it up. For example, I don’t litter for 2 reasons. 1. I’m a citizen. I like the United States; I like my little town of Cortland, Ohio and I don’t want it to look messy. 2. I don’t want to pay the \$1,000. fine!
 In the same way, we can serve God and do what pleases Him by simply wanting to please Him. Our desire to do what pleases Him will align us with His law – His Word. What pleases Him is living according to His law of love. It’s a law or way of living that’s totally different from the norm.

Even as I’m writing this, my wife just walked in the room and told me what the Lord put on her heart. It’s a perfect story to illustrate the heart of this book. She met a man; we’ll call him Steven. She struck up a conversation about how we’re fostering. He mentioned that his foster parents had stolen \$1,200 from him when he was a teen - shortly after he got his first job. The Lord told her to give him \$1,200 as if to say “God wants to be fully paid up, squared away and not feel like you’ve stolen from.” She’s writing him a card that says “God wants to bless you with this to say that HE is your Father and HE will always take care of you and give you what you need.”

This is the law of love. This is what it means to be a citizen of Heaven - to live with a different set of values, a different perspective, a different outlook on the circumstances you find yourself in. Living as a citizen of Heaven is the greatest joy one could experience on this earth. Are you ready to start living the full life and leave “the empty life” behind? Are you ready to live for something bigger than you? Are you ready to pray “Your Kingdom come and Your will be done” ???

THE EARLY CHURCH

Acts 5 and many other passages indicate to us that it was normal for the early Christians to have sick people brought to them and for those people to be healed! It was normal for the disciples to have people tormented by “unclean spirits” to be brought to them so that the disciples would cast that unclean spirit out and the person would be delivered or “set free” from that torment.

That kind of action was NORMAL in the early church. I would argue that we need that kind of action and activity in the church of Jesus Christ again.

Acts 3:5-7 tells us that Peter was walking by and a lame man cried out for healing and Peter responded “Silver and gold I don’t have but what I do have I give to you in the name of Jesus. Rise up and walk!” Peter helped the man up and he walked!

Today, we’ve got it backwards in most churches in America. Silver and gold we do have, but what we lack is the faith in the power of God to heal. I want to see miracles! I want to see what Jesus promised! I want to see what Peter, James and John saw, what Paul witnessed! I want to see miracles!

We need to believe the words of Jesus. We need to preach the Gospel with boldness and tell people what is available to them in Christ - freedom from sin and it’s heaven burden of guilt - freedom from sickness through the blood of Jesus!

I asked last week for some of you to send me miracle stories or testimonies and here’s one that I received: It’s from Kelly Hetherington. Some of you know her.

*A few years ago when I was at the doctors office they told me I had a problem with my liver and I needed to see a gastrologist... I went to meet with the doctor and he said OK let me do a scope and see what's going on and we'll go from there... A few nights later I had a dream that Vicki Hunter was supposed to pray for me and it was concerning a liver issue so I remember approaching her at church on Sunday ,told her about my dream and asked her if she would pray for me... She prayed for me. A week later I went and got the scope done and got the results, the doctor said your liver is perfectly fine...I was healed! Praise God!
- Kelly Hetherington*

Supernatural healing is REAL. We need to be reminded of that today!

Paul is writing to Timothy, a spiritual son of his, someone he is mentoring for leadership and he says ...

2 Timothy 1:6-7 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

God has not given you a spirit of fear but power love and a sound mind ...”
God was telling young Timothy and us HAVE COURAGE! Gods love can clear the anxiety and fear in your mind that causes you to be paralyzed, quiet and afraid.

“Don’t be intimidated ...” Paul is telling him! Don’t be fearful of sickness. Don’t be fearful of what happens if someone isn’t healed. Don’t be fearful of what people will say if someone isn’t healed or isn’t set free? Don’t be fearful at ALL!

JESUS CONQUERED DECEIT AND DEATH AT THE CROSS!

Paul says in his letter to the **Colossians 2:6-15**

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,

¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. Col 2:6–15

See to it that no one deceives you with lofty wisdom that doesn't come from Heaven.

Listen sometimes a demonic influence can be disguised in a very smart person. Human wisdom and Heaven's wisdom are two different things. The prayer is "Our Father who art in HEAVEN, hallowed be Your name, Your Kingdom come and YOUR will be done..."

Someone can be very educated, well-spoken and seemingly wise BUT be motivated by evil, selfish motives - motives that bring division and strife, confusion and mistrust. Someone can be smart in the world's eyes, but a total fool in God's eyes. Someone can be text-book smart but be opposed to authority God has put in place. Someone can be text-book smart but be opposed to the plans of God and rebels against them. This is why we need discernment. This is why we need to pray.

This is why having a discipline of prayer is important - you don't know what you'll run into in a given day but God does! Spend time in prayer in the morning with the Holy Spirit. When you do, you are putting on the armor of God. Your shield of faith is rising up. Your mind is being renewed. When you pray and get your mind and heart (emotions) aligned with God, then you begin to see the world for what it is:

EPH 6:10-18 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit,

We know we're on our way to that new age - that age to come. This is our blessed hope!

But for now, we are stuck in a way, right? We are trapped in time. But I have good news for you, is here and now that you see the miracles. Think about it, in heaven, there are no miracles because everything already is perfect!

It's HERE that we need a miracle! It's here on earth that things are broken, people are broken and hurting and in need of the Kingdom of Jesus!

King Jesus has the power here and now to heal someone and to save someone from their sin! He just wants YOU to be His voice and His light! Once we let Jesus forgive and heal us, He commissions us to go out and give that to others. He wants His children to rise up in faith and do the works of God - to be the light of the world!

Don't forget that the devil is a Poser, an Intruder and a Liar! ... that "The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy" but in the rest of that verse, Jesus says "BUT I HAVE COME TO BRING LIFE AND LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY!"

Jesus brings abundant life to broken people through His church - you and me! We, who were once broken and lost are now missionaries! We carry His mission. We have been co-missioned to bring the truth and power of Jesus into every situation!

STORY HERE>

You and I have victory over sin and evil intrusion! When we pray that and declare that over someone who is hurting, we are causing the Kingdom to come! We are agreeing with Jesus "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done!" It is God's will that you are healed!

In Luke 10, we see Luke's account of the Great Commission. Jesus tells them not to bring too much stuff with them when they travel town to town and to trust in His provision. He tells them to

Now if miracles start happening after you pray, just remember that it is JESUS who is doing the miracle and you are simply the vessel. Don't ever take credit in it or let pride sneak into your heart. In Luke's account, He included the warning Jesus gave to His disciples to stay humble and be thankful they're saved.

Luke 10:9-21

9. Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ... ¹⁷ The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" ¹⁸ And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

²⁰ Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." ²¹ In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven

and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.” ESV

Don't miss that last part. Jesus said that it's not only the humble - the childlike - that will receive this truth - this authority - this revelation. Those who are too smart and too wise in their own view of themselves won't receive this revelation. They will overthink it and insist that if they can't explain it then it can't be true. But the childlike will assert that although they can't explain it, God is bigger, wiser, smarter than they are and will simply in a childlike way, BELIEVE IT.

You are the light of the world Jesus said! MT 5:6-16

⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ¹³ “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.ESV

The disciples asked Jesus ‘Teach us to pray’ and Jesus replied with this amazing line “Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Jesus tells us what it means for His Kingdom to come. It means we shine the light of Jesus everywhere we go by being merciful, by being pure in heart, by desiring righteousness, by being peacemakers and loving reconciliation. Jesus is explaining to us in the sermon on the mount what it means for the Kingdom of God to come to earth! What's the purpose? So that people would give glory to our “Father who is in heaven”

I wonder ... when is the last time you showed the light of Jesus at the office?

When is the last time that someone walked in complaining of pain and you simply said “Can I pray for you? I believe Jesus can heal you.”

And you prayed with them.

Do you know that Jesus simply wants invited into the conversation.

WE HAVE Righteousness Peace & Joy in the Holy Spirit

The Bible defines the Kingdom as being righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; Satan, God's enemy wants to steal the joy of that from people. YOU, as a Christian, have the power to give people that joy - that light - that hope!

When we pray, we are inviting the Kingdom to come.

When we pray, we are inviting the Kingdom of God to defeat the kingdom of darkness.

The Kingdom of God is unique.

The Kingdom of God is here and not yet.

It is fast and it is slow.

It's here and not yet.

Jesus said often "The Kingdom of God is at hand" and he'd always do this before doing a miracle. It's as if He was declaring the authority of God over the situation in the process

The kingdom of God is so real that it's beyond a castle made of stone and edicts made by a human king. It's the attitude in which we live knowing that we're serving a King of righteousness and the Prince of Peace, therefore peace is on our lips and righteousness is in our hearts as we communicate with one another as it's citizens. The kingdom is all around and within. It's not made of stone but it is life itself!

Insert some of my sermon from 2019 "When God Doesn't Heal"

I personally believe that is IS God's will that you are healed. When we are not healed, it means we are given a chance to deepen our trust in God - our trust in His timing and His will and His ways. But I will always contend and believe for healing because that's what Jesus taught me to do when I read His Word.

I've been a pastor a long time and know that sometimes we simply don't see the healing we want to see. It does not change who God is!

It is God's will that you be healed. Believe that. Know that. Yes there are times when people are *not* healed when we pray and believe. Even ourselves - we have times when we full-heartedly believe to the healed but are not. **That does not change our trust in the reality that God can and will heal us one day.**

As you hear me say often, we are healed here or there. Here on earth or there in Heaven. Either way, we are promised a perfectly healthy body, free of pain and sickness!

When we believe that Jesus died for us, we believe that He died AS us. He died to cure us not only of our sin but of the sickness that defiles our body.

Our bodies are not designed to be sick. In fact, it's remarkable how they heal themselves so often isn't it!? I mean, I explain this to my kids often when they get a little cut. We put a bandaid on it and I often will say "It'll be healed in a few days. God has designed it to heal itself."

I won't pretend to a DR right now and tell you HOW the body heals itself; I just know that in many cases it does.

But what about the super-natural kind of healing?

Is that real? Does that really happen? How?

Romans 6:2-3 tells us that we put our faith in Jesus Christ that we are unified with Christ, buried with Him in His death and resurrected to new life with Him in His resurrection. Our faith in Jesus *now*, unites us with what He did back *then*. That faith in the grace of God secures for us a future of perfect union with God in His perfect Heaven!

But Jesus said some interesting things about His Kingdom being here and now and not just there and then.

The Kingdom of God is here and not yet. The full reality of it is yet to be seen but we can see glimpses of it's perfection in our broken world now when we put our faith in Jesus and simply ask Him to intervene!

When Jesus said “the kingdom of God isn’t something you see saying “there it is” it’s in the midst of you.”

Phil 3:19-21 says ... “Their mind is on earthly things. 20 **But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control**, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

A redeemed life shouldn't be wasted! When we accept the forgiveness and salvation God offers and then don't spend the rest of our life pursuing knowing God and advancing His kingdom, we are wasting the life that God saved. It's not about what you can do. It's about what He already did. Life is about being so grateful that Jesus died and rose again that you bring that reality to other people.

If Spiritually, you own a Bigati but are driving a Prius, get up out of that Prius and get in the Bigati and drive that thing! Walk in step with the Spirit, letting HIM lead your thoughts and speech - everything from showing love and kindness to bringing healing and deliverance!

The kingdom of God is so real that it's beyond a castle made of stone and edicts made by a human king. It's the attitude in which we live knowing that we're serving a King of righteousness and the Prince of Peace, therefore peace is on our lips and righteousness is in our hearts as we communicate with one another as it's citizens. The kingdom is all around and within. It's not made of stone but it is life itself!

God wants us to be citizens of Heaven while living on earth.

We all have a longing in our heart for something. Something more. Something greater. When our heart is broken, when we are saddened by disappointment, when a life is lost, we as humans protest. Why? We are made for something greater. We know at a core level that we

are made for a world that isn't broken. We are made to be in a relationship that doesn't sever. We are made for heaven. We are only passing through.

We are simply on a short journey here and we need reminded of that. We need to know that. We need to grasp that we are made to know and love the eternal God who created us. We need to be reminded that Heaven is our reality. Until we do, nothing will make sense. That's the goal of this book, to remind of us of that.

The Empty Life

1 Peter 1:17-21

"And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time here as "temporary residents." 18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. 19 It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. 20 God chose Him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days He has been revealed for your sake. 21 Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because He raised Christ from the dead and gave Him great glory." NLT

My friend Eric Victor told his story during our sermon series called #MyStory. In the video, he shared with us that he was pursuing an empty life where his addiction to drugs became so bad he'd wake up and not know where he was. He didn't see his life as having any real value or purpose. He didn't know the incredible price God had paid for him - the proof of his value. His drug addiction led to theft which led him to prison. He became somebody he never wanted to be. His life was empty and his prison cell was as cold as the steel bars that locked him in. Even worse, the prison in his heart made him feel trapped, trapped in a life he never intended.

One day in prison, a Christian man gave him a prophetic word and witnessed to him. When He gave his life to Jesus, everything changed. That empty void was suddenly full, full of joy and a new found purpose. He now knew that life wasn't meant to be lived for himself. It was meant to be lived for his Creator. He now wasn't aimed at pleasing himself but pleasing God. This is the *full* life, the life of someone who knows what it means to be a citizen of Heaven!

You may not be tempted to drugs and alcohol but I can guarantee that whatever Satan tempts you with, it leads to the same emptiness my friend Eric experienced before coming to Christ. Your temptation might be the appearance of success. Maybe you work 60 hours a week and wish you worked more in hopes to finally make that promotion. Maybe you're a Christian and you truly have received God's grace but lately you've been living for something very temporal - something like the American dream instead of Heavenly reality. Your temptation may look like Eric's or it may be very different. But I know this, Satan wants you to live for the here and now instead of the there and then.

What We Love

We are propelled by what we love. Our loves and wants push us towards our actions. Transversely we can make decisions that guide our love to it's proper place - a place of rest in God. We must be willing to acknowledge that. We must be willing to agree on these core precepts if we're going to arrive at the life God intends for us - a life lived as a citizen of Heaven. But for now let's simply agree that if you buy golf clubs, then you love golf. If you get up early to exercise every day, you love the feeling of being fit. Our loves drive our actions and

define who we are. I read a great book called *What We Love* and the premise is true. Our brain finds a way to find logic to justify the actions that give us what we want. In other words, we find logic for what we love.

One of my questions I'm asking today is this ... what do you love? Or better yet, *who* do you love. It's possible you were made to love GOD and to be loved BY God.

You weren't made for a certain lifestyle, a certain size home, a position at work, a retirement package that finally delivers your happiness at age 65. You were made for someone not something. You were made for God! You were made to enjoy being a citizen of Heaven! You were made for the enjoyment of God - your life brings God joy! He loves your personality! He loves YOU! You were made to return that enjoyment - to enjoy GOD and to enjoy bringing His Kingdom to earth!

RETIREMENT? REALLY? THAT'S THE GOAL?

I was standing in line at the bank when I overheard the teller and the customer chatting about the future. I'd like to quote verbatim their conversation.

The teller: Hello, how are you?

The customer: Just working till I can finally retire.
(The man looked to be about 50)

The teller: Oh yeah

The customer: Yeah, one day I'll get there.

Sound familiar?

Too many people, even Christians feel that

How do I know this? Out the heart the mouth speaks. And what do I hear so many believers speak about? Retirement.

Really? That's the big goal in life? That's the love of your heart? That's what causes you to rise in the morning and head off to work? If so, you have been sorely misinformed.

It turns out that many retired people battle depression. It turns out many retired people finally enter their "golden years" and discover them to be far from gold, more like a cold bronze. Why? They discover that their work did give them a purpose and a sense of identity and belonging. While that's true and good I believe that their work only numbed the feeling of longing or want at least 9 to 5. The feeling of want is there no matter what and that *want* feeling is often misunderstood.

When you feel you want to be loved by your spouse, what you actually want is to be loved by God. What you need to know is that you already are!

When you want to be accepted at work and validated as a smart contributor, I believe that desire comes from a root desire to be approved by God, our Maker.

When you were a child and you wanted to be affirmed by your parents, that's a root desire to be loved by God, your Creator. The Artist. The Father. The King.

When you want grace from someone you've wronged, it's because God is able to give you grace and forgiveness every time you've fallen short.

What you really want, whether you know it or not, is to know God and be loved by Him.
Do you know that yet?

All you have to do is accept His free gift of salvation and choose to live for Him. Choose to live in the freedom from sin and the joy that Jesus paid for.

Romans 3:23 says that “All have sinned and fallen short of God’s standard.” The good news is that God provided a way out! In Romans 6:23, God reveals “The result of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.” If you realize right now that you’re a sinner and your life is leading to death and you want to change the course of your life, then just take some time right now to surrender to God. Pray and ask God for forgiveness.

ALTAR CALL

For most of us sitting in a church, it’s likely you’re saved; you’re a Christian. But it’s possible some of you are here and you are just curious about all this “heaven” and “God” stuff. If that’s you, then can I tell you how to become a citizen of Heaven? I want to give you the greatest gift of all - the gift of life, the gift of hope, the gift that is Jesus Christ. I want to tell you about my Savior. Since I’ve accepted Christ as my Savior and asked Him to forgive me of my sins, my life has been so fulfilling. I now have a purpose and a direction in life. I have a peace I could have never known. I have a joy I would have never experienced without Him. You’re reading this for a reason. God loves you so much, He prompted you to read this book and He is drawing you unto Himself. He loves you so much! He loves you so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to come to earth to die like a criminal so you and I could go free. Jesus paid the penalty of everything that we’ve done wrong and even everything that we may do wrong in the future. He paid it once and for all so we can simply accept that payment for our sins and be forgiven of every debt and wrong-doing. If you want Jesus to forgive you of your sins and you want to make God your Heavenly Father, then let’s just ask Him right now to do that. Why don’t you pray a prayer something like this:

Dear God, I know I’m a sinner. I need your forgiveness. I need you to save me. I’ve messed-up my life without You, and I now I see how incredible You are. Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died for my sins – that you took the punishment that I deserved. I believe that You rose from the dead and You now want to give me that resurrection life. I receive God. Give me Your resurrection life! Forgive me and make me new. I give my life to You. I surrender. I choose to live for You Jesus – to follow You and obey Your Word, to give you the glory You deserve. In Jesus name, Amen.

If you just prayed that, PRAISE GOD!!! Welcome to the family! Let us know about it by telling someone on our prayer team or the person at the Welcome Center in the lobby. If you’re more of a private person, you can email us on the contact page of our website. We’d love to talk with you about your new life as a believer and what’s next for you in this big change.