



Upward: Adoration

Week 1 – Prayer – 3/1/2026

Class Introduction

So how are you doing you with prayer? How is your prayer life going?

- Just this question can be convicting.
- Most of us feel like we need some work in our prayer lives.
- But we may be in different places with prayer.
- Some of us may need to be convicted and challenged, some may need encouragement, some may need ideas because things are stale, some may need others to help them along.
- I hope this class provides all those things and more, that we all would grow in prayer and be refreshed and be renewed.

One resource that has been helpful for me is Tim Keller's book called *Prayer*.

- In the book he shares a boat metaphor.
- This is to help take a quick check-in on how prayer is going in our lives.
- He says think of your soul as a boat.
- Think of one of those Viking ships with sails for catching the wind and also people who rowed to get more speed.
 - So this boat has rows and sails.
- There are four categories of the prayer life in this boat metaphor.
 - Sailing, rowing, drifting, and sinking.

1. Are you Sailing?

- Your prayer life is going well.
 - Not perfect but you pray often and see answers.
- Sense His presence often in prayer.

2. Are you Rowing?

- Your prayer life is going so so.
- You pray regularly, but it's more of a duty than a delight.
- You experience little freshness of the Spirit
- It's mostly done on your own strength.

3. Are you Drifting?

- Instead of rowing in response to dryness, your soul is drifting away from God.
- You spend little time praying.
- You go to church and read the bible some, but drifting into negative behaviors and attitudes because there is little personal prayer.

4. Are you Sinking?

- Prayer is really not part of your day to day life.
- Heart toward God and your prayer life is not doing that well.
- All forward motion toward God has been lost and in great danger of burnout.

What might a healthy prayer life look like according to our metaphor?

- Well, its combining sailing and rowing.
- Healthy prayer is rowing as you sail!
- Prayer takes work and discipline, which is the rowing part.
- But it must be empowered by the Spirit, which is the wind in the sails.
- So prayer is being reliant on the Lord through grace, and combining that with being disciplined.
 - We ask God to bring the wind into our sails as we row.
- So, healthy prayer is relying on the Spirit to empower our prayers through the Bible and through the encouragement of the church community.
- While at the same time, we exert effort by making the time to pray, by practicing consistency, and by establishing good routines.
- And we ask the Lord to give us fresh working of the Spirit and truth, giving us regular refreshment and strengthening power.

So, let's pray that, during this series, God will give us a fresh wind in our prayer sails as we row.

Prayer Class Plan

There are three categories of prayer,

1. **Upward Prayer** - adoration and thanksgiving.
2. **Inward Prayer** - confession, repentance, assurance.
3. **Outward Prayer** - asking, supplication as bringing requests to God.

So, in the next five weeks, we will cover prayer comprehensively,

- For each week, we will look at definitions and biblical examples of each type of prayer.

- Each week I want to give you practical ideas that you can use to refresh and improve your prayer life.
 - And I also want to provide some growth prayer projects for us to do with others, to do on Life Group or with a spouse or friend.
 - So we will directly apply what we learn about prayer in community. I think that will be a powerful part of this series.
- So, let's take a look at Upward Prayer – which has two aspects, adoration and thanksgiving, let's start with,

ADORATION

- Another word for this is, “praise.” Adoration is to praise God for who He is.
- One challenge with prayer is that our adoration can often get rushed or even neglected.
- We are often very quick to want get to our pressing requests.
- And there always seems to be pressing needs, so we can rush through praise.
- R.C. Sproul, in *Following Christ*, brings this idea out,

“The most appropriate way to begin prayer is with adoration. Sadly, we are most often moved to prayer by our desires for supplication. We go to God when we want something from him. We are in such a hurry to mention our requests and articulate our needs that we either omit adoration or skip over it quickly...”

- We do believe that giving our requests to God is important and critical, after all Scripture says, “cast all your anxieties on him.”
- But what percentage of your prayer time is spent on Upward Prayer?
- In adoration, we slow down and we intentionally focus on God before getting to all our personal requests.

I like this **definition** of adoration from the *Dictionary of Biblical Themes*, adoration is,

“An attitude of worship characterized by love and reverence to God.” [repeat]

- In adoration we express our love toward God.
- And we praise him for who he is.
 - He is the King, Lord, and Creator of the Universe.
 - And so we bring reverence and honor that is due Him.
- So what did the disciples do when Jesus revealed his glory? After the transfiguration, after the resurrection, after the ascension? Upward Prayer!
- They worshipped him. In response to who he was, they gave him honor.

- The biblical pattern for adoration prayer is to highlight God's characteristics, meditate upon them, and then reflect them back to God in prayer or in song.

1 Chronicles 29:10-13,

- This is David at the end of life, worshipping with Israel, passing on reign to Solomon.
- Great passage and just loaded with aspects of who God is!
- You can tell David was a man of praise, lived a life of praise for many years.
- One practical idea, you can even use as a prayer prompt for adoration.
- As you work through the passage, pause to think of what is said about God, then pray the theme back to God, then move on to the next theme.

There are many Psalms of Adoration in Scripture.

- These Psalms are overflowing with praise and can help us craft our words as we seek to practice Upward Prayer.
- Let's look at an example, Psalm 103.

With Upward Prayer, it is also helpful to find a good resource that lists themes of adoration.

- Then use that resource to help jog our memory on praise themes and we then pray them back to the Lord.

One resource I have used is, *A Way to Pray* by Matthew Henry (ed. Palmer Robertson).

In the book, Matthew Henry defines what adoration prayer is and he describes how we can put it into practice, he says,

"In Praise - we approach God with a heart full of praise for the glories of his person and work.

- Acknowledge God's existence.
- Admit you can never fully grasp the greatness of God.
- Bring before your mind some of the glorious aspects of this great God.
 - Eternal, ever-present, knows all, wise, rule, power, holy, true, just.
- In adoration, give glory to God as the Creator of all things, the ruler of the world.
- Give distinct honor to each of the three Persons of the Godhead (Father, Son, Spirit).
- Acknowledge the privilege of approaching God in prayer."

Another example is the ESV Promises Book

- Before a meal, or bed, read one section and praise God for what is listed.

Table Groups

What are the blessings and benefits of adoration and thanksgiving prayer?

- Our prayers are more Scriptural, our prayers are patterned on Word.
- We are humbled, see God for who he is, and we see our need for him.
- We gain perspective, God is eternal and has a plan & life is not just about us.
- Our prayers are more balanced. They are more full, not just giving requests.
- Another benefit is that we gain confidence when we do bring our requests, they become founded upon his power, strength, mercy.
- Upward Prayer renews our purpose and refreshes us.
 - Tim Keller says praise has a, “power to heal what is wrong with us and create inner spiritual health.”
- Consistent Upward Prayer can “reorder our loves,” Keller goes on to say,

“What can re-engineer our very inner being? What can create healthy human community? Worship and adoration of God. We must love God supremely, and that can only be cultivated through praise and adoration.”

- We are created to love God supremely, but we often, functionally, in our day to day lives, live as though we worship other things.
- So adoration helps reorder our hearts back to God.
- Consistent upward prayer cultivates a profound change in our inner soul, moves us back to what we are created for.
- Upward prayer changes our desires, loves, and affections to be more and more directed toward God and his glory, which is what we were created to do!
- Upward Prayer can also change our church. It will make us into a people more characterized by worship, praise, and thanks.

Practical ideas on how to practice Upward Prayer,

- Pray through a Psalm of praise or Psalm of thanksgiving.
(Praise - 103, 139, 145 : Thanks - 30, 40, 107, 118).
- Write your own psalm of praise or thanksgiving, patterned after one in Scripture.
- Pray through the names of God.
- Pray through the attributes of God.
- Use praise music or hymn book, sing, and turn it into a prayer time.
- Use a good resource that lists God’s characteristics or thankfulness topics.

Practicing Upward Prayer

Each week of this prayer series I want to leave you with a Prayer Practice,

- You can do these things with your family or with friends, Life Group.

This week's prayer practice is to do Upward Prayer, adoration

- Pray through a praise Psalm (103, 139, 145)
- God's attributes sheet.