

Show Me How

[Jesus' disciple said,] "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

Song: "Teach Me to Pray"

I sat at our family's worn, upright piano and played Beethoven's "Für Elise." After I'd finished, my son said, "Mama, can you show me how to play the song?" So I pulled out beginner's sheet music to teach him the notes. Soon he was slowly plunking out the tune.

Jesus' disciples had heard Him preach, seen Him perform miracles, and watched His interactions with others. All that they had seen and heard made them want to learn from Him. They were ready for a lesson, and they asked Him to teach them to pray.

As we come to the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit, the triune God faithfully teaches us how to grow in our relationship with Him. And by the light of His Word, He directs our steps and guides our actions. Our part is simply to come to Him as a child to a devoted parent, saying, "Lord, teach me!" With patient love, He will show us how walk in His grace and truth. In the process, we will experience the joy of a close spiritual connection with Him. As we remain teachable, we experience life with Him to the fullest (Psalm 16:11).

Father, thank You for teaching me Your ways! I want to be a good student and learn all that You would show me today. In Jesus' name, amen.

July 3–9. **Kathleen Dunlap** lives in Colorado with her husband, two sons, and three crazy dogs. She enjoys running, knitting, and exploring the mountains.

Privately and Sincerely

[Jesus said,] “When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father” (Matthew 6:6).

Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Song: “I Must Tell Jesus”

Alexa opened her spiral-bound notebook and wrote, “God, I need You.” From her pen, prayers poured onto the pages. Requests for a vibrant marriage, outbursts of anger over infertility, sadness from grief over a death in the family—all were brought to her Heavenly Father with complete transparency. The words that no one else would read or hear were seen and understood by God alone.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His followers to pray privately and humbly, not with public displays of piety or attitudes of self-importance. God isn’t interested in religiosity; He wants His children to come to Him with authentic, sincere hearts.

In our private prayer time with God, we don’t have to hold back or hide anything. He knows our hearts. As we voice our deepest desires and needs, He will comfort us and give us rest from our burdens (Matthew 11:28-30). Our prayer “in secret” can be at a designated time and place, but it can also take place any time we’re alone and want to lift our hearts to God (e.g., while doing dishes, during a commute, or on a walk). As we cultivate such a prayerful relationship with God, we draw near to Him, and He draws near to us (James 4:8).

Father, thank You that I can come before You with my hopes, dreams, questions, and frustrations. Help me trust Your love for me as I open my heart to You in prayer today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Unchanging God

You, LORD, are the Most High over all the earth (Psalm 97:9).

Scripture: Psalm 97

Song: “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

In December of 2021, a fire spread through northern Colorado, destroying homes and businesses and marring the landscape. Entire neighborhoods were consumed. In the wake of the disaster, surrounding communities responded with care packages until the local donation center was filled to capacity. While residents’ circumstances had suddenly changed, the solidarity of their neighbors and the strength of their hope had not. Families would survive. Homes would be rebuilt.

The psalmist describes the reign of God over the earth in vivid language. Thick clouds, darkness, lightning—these elements surround the awesome power of the Most High. We might also see them symbolically as events in our world that can block our view of God’s unchanging purposes for us. Because of God’s power and might, He reigns over every twist and turn of life, and the righteous thrive under His faithful watch.

In a flash, circumstances can change. We might face a bleak diagnosis, a job loss, or a relationship failure. Yet, whenever a shadow is cast across our lives, God’s presence provides light, hope, and peace. We may lose material goods, financial security, or even a loved one, but God remains faithful. He will send help to us, comfort our hearts, and guide our next steps. His goodness, kindness, and faithfulness are immutable. Because of these, we can rejoice, no matter what the future holds.

Father, thank You for being unchanging, no matter how much my life shakes. Thank You that You are in all, through all, and above all. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Song of Joy

God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets (Psalm 47:5).

Scripture: Psalm 47

Song: “The Wonder of It All”

The first time I skied in Colorado, the ski patrol rescued me after I fell multiple times. Since I hadn't made it even halfway to the bottom, they put me on the ski lift, and I rode it down while other skiers gawked at me. The ride provided a beautiful, breathtaking view of the Rocky Mountains. While I gazed at the gorgeous panorama, I recognized the humor in getting rescued off a mountain because of clumsiness. Despite my embarrassment, I laughed.

The author of Psalm 47 encouraged God's people to remember why God should be praised. God, who is king, subdues His enemies, provides a lovely inheritance for His people, and reigns over every nation. He is worthy of our praise and honor because of who He is and what He does. He alone deserves to be called “awesome.”

In our modern world, search engines, instant messages, and on-demand entertainment often distract and captivate our minds. Spiritually, we may be continually tripping over their presence in our lives. What if we allowed ourselves a break to watch the sunrise, to notice how a loved one's hand feels in ours, or to appreciate the sound of friends' laughter? The loving nature of Almighty God provides rich opportunities all around us to bless us and bring joy. Let's stop to notice, and then to praise.

Father, thank You for all the goodness You have waiting for me as I take time to notice life's simple, beautiful moments. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Time for Good

[Jesus said,] “It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath”
(Matthew 12:12).

Scripture: Matthew 12:1-13

Song: “To the Work”

The social media post posed this question: “What are ways you ‘do good’ in the world?” The flood of replies provided a wide range of examples: working in the church nursery so that tired moms can attend the service, leaving notes of encouragement for others, modeling self-compassion for family members, coaching 7th graders, doing free labor on veterans’ cars. The responses revealed that there are myriad ways to do something good, to bless and support others.

Jesus refuted the religious leaders’ criticisms about His and His disciples’ actions. The Pharisees’ misconceptions arose from their over-strict interpretation of and additions to God’s laws. Jesus reminded them that God gave the law of the Sabbath Day to bless His people with rest (Exodus 34:21), not to prohibit them from doing a good deed or meeting a need at hand.

The term *do good* sounds cliché, but as followers of Jesus, this is our calling, even to do good to our enemies (Luke 6:27). Donating to a local shelter, volunteering at a food bank, helping a neighbor with yard work—these are just a few of the many ways we might actively engage our world with the kindness of God. Jesus modeled graciousness in His interactions with others. Let us follow His lead and continue His work while we are here.

Father, I want to have my eyes open today for opportunities to “do good,” even when it doesn’t appear to be fruitful. Thank You for helping me as I follow Your Son’s example. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Jesus Our Hope

This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “. . . In his name the nations will put their hope” (Matthew 12:17, 21).

Scripture: Matthew 12:14-21

Song: “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee”

In early 2021, Peru’s government mandated that group homes for children and youth be closed. At-risk kids would be placed with family or friends. New Hope Peru, a non-profit Christian organization, immediately offered to help train and organize local churches to assist children through this transition. New Hope’s presence offered strength and stability in the tumult.

Jesus, under threat of death by religious leaders, continued to heal people. His sole agenda was to do the will of His Father, as described in Isaiah’s prophecy (Isaiah 42). Jesus was chosen and appointed by His Father not only to be a gentle, meek, and humble servant but also the Savior of the world. Through His finished work of redemption, He provides hope for all who will put their trust in Him.

Circumstances may test our faith—a financial crisis, terrible loss, or serious diagnosis. News reports may paint an unsettling picture of the future. We need not lose heart. Our faith is not anchored in this temporary world. Jesus suffered, died, and rose again to conquer the power of sin and death. We look to Him—our hope, strength, and security. One day, perhaps soon, Jesus will return and establish us in our new home with Him (John 14:1-3), where all things will be made new (Revelation 21:1-5).

Father, thank You for the secure hope Jesus provides and for the home He is preparing for me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Truth over Tradition

The Pharisees . . . said [of Jesus], “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons” (Matthew 12:24).

Scripture: Matthew 12:22-32

Song: “Just a Closer Walk with Thee”

The man focused intently as he bent over his writing. Church authorities from Rome wanted him killed, and his protector—a regional ruler in Germany—could not long keep him safe. So, his friends hid him in a castle. Deemed a heretic for defending faith from a purely biblical standpoint, Martin Luther used his time in exile to translate the Greek New Testament into German. Despite efforts to stop its publication, Luther’s Bible influenced other reformers and spread the gospel (salvation by grace through faith alone) across Europe.

The Pharisees falsely accused Jesus of using Satan’s power to cast out demons. Because Jesus’ authority threatened their position and power, they lingered in distrust and cynicism toward Him. Clinging to their system, they rejected the work of God manifested in Jesus’ miracles and teaching.

Faith traditions are meant to draw us closer to Christ. When they become the essence rather than the means—or when they take on an unbiblical meaning—they become useless and even dangerous. When we know God’s Word and are guided by His Spirit, we can recognize His work and ways. And as we yield to Him, our own work and witness will be vibrant, always pointing to Christ.

Father, whether in my familiar way of serving You or in some new work You might have for me, help me stay grounded in Your Word and in step with Your Spirit. In Jesus’ name, amen.