



Iransforming Lives Through Intercessory Prayer And Fasting

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THE MODEL PRAYER & YOU

Do you feel that your prayer life is inadequate? Do you long to grow in the ability to pray powerfully and effectively? The disciples of Jesus did. In fact, they asked Him to teach them how to pray, "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught His disciples" (Luke 11:1). After hearing Him pray, they saw the shallowness of their own praying. They felt their heed for Him to teach them how to pray.

In response to that request, Jesus taught the disciples the Model Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). Jesus gave this prayer to the disciples as an example of how they were to pray. He intended for this prayer to be a model on which they could build their prayer lives. The Model Prayer was not meant to be a prayer said by rote (Matthew 6:7-9). Jesus was using the same manner of instruction as the rabbis of the day did. He simply provided them with an outline for prayer.

The Model Prayer is Jesus' outline for prayer. This outline covers the elements of true prayer. It reveals the areas that you must deal with in order for your praying to be powerful and pleasing to the Father. It is a comprehensive and clear outline of how you are to seek and communicate with your heavenly Father. All that the Word of God says on the subject of prayer could be aligned under these topics.

The topics presented in the Model Prayer

Seeking The Father's Praise-Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name;

Seeking The Father's Kingdom-Your kingdom come;

Seeking The Father's Will-Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven;

Seeking The Father's Provision-Give us this day our daily bread;

Seeking The Father's Forgiveness-And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;

Seeking The Father's Protection-And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one;

Seeking The Father's Honor-For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, we will emphasize using the Model Prayer as a tool for evaluating your prayer life. Since it is Jesus' outline for prayer, it is the standard for your prayer life. As this new year begins, I challenge you to examine and evaluate your prayer life. You need to make a conscious, deliberate examination of your prayer life—your strengths and your weaknesses, what you are practicing and what you are not practicing, what you need to work on and what you need to change.

In order to examine your prayer life, you can use the Model Prayer as a guide. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you need to develop and change in your prayer life. Plead with Him to show you how you need to seek Him in the coming year.

Dr. Kevin Meador, 595 Stratton Road, Decatur, MS 39327 (601) 635-2180 EMAIL: prayercloset_1998@yahoo.com WEB PAGE - www.prayerclosetministries.org Call on Him to reveal your strengths and weaknesses to you. You can grow and mature in prayer! You can pray with power and effectiveness! Yet, a necessary step to this is examining your prayer life and allowing the Spirit to guide you and change you.

Why Should I Evaluate My Prayer Life?

It may sound unusual even strange to you to say that you need to evaluate your prayer life. Yet, there are some legitimate reasons why you need to evaluate your prayer life. First, the unexamined prayer life is an immature prayer life. It is only by evaluating your strengths and weaknesses in praver that you are going to face them and deal with them. In order to grow in your ability to communicate with God and intercede, you need to confront openly and honestly the struggles and weaknesses that you have in your prayer life. Maturity in your prayer life results when you work through your weaknesses, make changes, and build on your strengths. You can do this by periodically examining your prayer life.

Second, evaluating your prayer life will help you make sure that your praying is in line with the Father's desires. The Model Prayer reveals how you should seek your Father. This model reveals God's desire for your prayer life. In John 17:8, Jesus pointedly declares, "For I have given to them the words which You have given Me." The words of Jesus Christ are what the Father wanted Christ to teach. The origin of the Model Prayer is the heart of God. It is a revelation of how He wants His people to pray. When you evaluate your prayer life according to its principles, you are striving to bring your prayer life in line with what the Father desires. This will lead to power and effectiveness in prayer.

Evaluating your prayer life will aid you in building a healthy and vibrant prayer life. A healthy and vibrant prayer life is built through variety. It is establishing a balance between the different aspects of prayer. Many times we have a tendency to focus on one particular aspect of prayer over the others. This will drain power and effectiveness from your prayer life. This turns prayer into a dry, boring ritual. When you are covering the various aspects of prayer, it provides variety and gives life and power to your praying. By evaluating your prayer life, you can make sure that you are experiencing a variety in your praying. This will move you toward a healthy and vibrant prayer life.

A final reason to evaluate your prayer life is to submit yourself to the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry. Jesus declared that the Holy Spirit would be your Teacher, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit is our internal Teacher. His teaching ministry extends to prayer. He is the One who teaches the believer how to pray. When you evaluate your prayer life, you are submitting vourself to His guidance in prayer. As you ask questions and examine your prayer life, you are inviting Him to speak to you, change you, and guide you. This is essential to growing and maturing in praver.

In order to evaluate your prayer life, you will need to look at the various parts of the Model Prayer. From these parts, you should ask yourself some questions concerning your prayer life. The following is offered as a guide to help you evaluate your prayer life. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight into each phrase. Plead with Him to show you what you need to build on, what you need to improve, and what you need to change. You can do this in a day or you might consider doing this over a period of time. The key is to examine your prayer life according to the teaching of Jesus.

Seeking The Father's Praise

When you evaluate your prayer life, you can begin with the phrase, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." This phrase teaches us about the One to whom we are praying. Each phrase provides you with questions that you should ask yourself about your prayer life.

The words "Our Father" reveals that God is your Father. You are not praying to an unknown God. You are crying out to an idol. You are praying to the living God who is Your Father. He has chosen you. He has created you. He has sustained you. He has saved you. He has given you the privilege to enter His presence and talk to Hin and listen to Him. Throughout the Bible, God is revealed in a variety of ways. Yet, the primary New Testament teaching about God is that He is a Father to those who trust in His Son Jesus Christ, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3:26). Prayer is nothing more and nothing less than intimate fellowship with your heavenly Father.

The fact that God is your Father should have a tremendous impact on your prayer life. It should deliver you from hypocritical praying (Matthew 6:5). It should eliminate useless chatter or vain repetition of phrases (Matthew 6:7). It should create within you a confidence to pray because He is your Father and because He loves you (Matthew 6:8).

The phrase "Our Father" should cause you to ask yourself the following questions about your prayer life:

- Am I being open and honest in my praying to God? Am I pouring out my heart or am I praying shallow prayers without much depth?
- Am I trusting in God to hear me and answer me because I am His child?
- ♦ Am I striving to know my Father? Am I focusing on Him when I pray?

The phrase "in heaven" refers to the sovereignty and greatness of your Father. He is your loving and merciful Father. Yet, He is also the living and sovereign God, the Creator of all. He is the majestic Holy One who is holy and righteous. We can approach Him with confidence. But, that confidence must be balanced with reverence and awe.

This phrase should lead us to ask the following questions about your prayer life:

- Am I worshipping God from my heart on a regular basis? Do I neglect praise in order to focus on other parts of prayer?
- Am I convinced of God's power and sovereignty to hear me and answer me? Do I doubt His power to do what I ask of Him?

The phrase "hallowed be Your name" refers to glorifying God. The word "hallowed" means "to sanctify, to set apart". Jesus is teaching that you are to adore and exalt the name of God. The name of God represents who He is. To hallow the name of God is to glorify and honor Him for who He is. Jesus uses this phrase to teach you that your praying should glorify God. You need to worship and adore Him for who He is. You also need to pray for those things that are going to glorify Him. Your praying has to be God-centered rather than self-centered.

Too many times our praying is focused on our needs and wants rather than on the glory of God. Our focus is on what is best for me and not on what is going to glorify God. When you make requests of God, your requests should glorify Him. Your asking should be motivated and guided first by what is going to give God the glory and praise.

This phrase should cause you to ask the following questions about your prayer life:

- Do my prayer requests glorify God? When I ask of God, is it first and foremost motivated by the glory of God?
- ♦ Is my praying more self-centered or Godcentered?

In this first section of the Model Prayer, Jesus teaches that you are to worship God, trust Him as your powerful Father, and ask for those things that are going to glorify Him. You are to seek the Father's praise by worshipping Him, trusting Him and His power, and glorifying His name.

Seeking The Father's Kingdom

The second phrase of the Model Prayer is "Your kingdom come". Jesus is teaching that you are to pray for the coming of the kingdom. What does Jesus mean when He refers to the "kingdom"? Jesus' passion was the kingdom. It was the major theme of His preaching. When He began His public ministry, He began by proclaiming this message, "From that time, Jesus began to preach and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). The word "kingdom" appears forty-nine times in Matthew, sixteen in Mark, and thirty-eight in Luke. This is 103 times! Preaching the kingdom was His consuming passion, "But He said to them, I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Luke 4:43).

The kingdom is the reign and rule of God in the hearts of those who surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. A person enters the kingdom of God when

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he or she repents of sin and turns to Jesus Christ in faith. The kingdom advances as more and more people surrender to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance. The kingdom grows as people commit their lives to Jesus Christ through hearing and believing the gospel.

When Jesus says that you are to pray for the kingdom to come, He is teaching you to pray for the salvation of sinners through preaching and witnessing. You are to pray that people would surrender their lives to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance. It is to plead with Him for the spread of the gospel across the world. It is to call on the Lord of the harvest to raise up laborers so that people will hear and believe the gospel.

You should pray for the conversion of the people around you. It is important to intercede for the lost in your area. Yet, Jesus' teaching to pray for the kingdom to come should cause you to pray for the spread of the gospel around the world. You should be pleading with Him for the conversion of the nations. This is a call to pray for missionaries and their labors.

The indifference of believers in praying for missionaries, the spread of the gospel, and the conversion of the nations amazes me. When I write or preach on this subject, there is little interest in these topics. It is easy to develop self-centeredness in prayer—to pray only for those around me and that which concerns me. Jesus' command to pray for the coming of the kingdom is a call to forsake self-centered praying and to plead for the nations of the world. The Model Prayer should stir you to pray that people everywhere would come to Jesus in faith and repentance. It should motivate you to get involved and get in on God's global purpose.

This phrase should move you to ask the following questions about your prayer life:

- Do I pray for the salvation of lost people? Do I plead to God that others would commit their life to the Lord Jesus Christ?
- Am I praying for the spread of the gospel around the world? Am I pleading for missionaries? Am I laboring to get involved in God's global purposes?
- Am I looking forward to and praying for the final triumph of the kingdom of God? Am I crying out on a regular basis, "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus"?

Seeking The Father's Will

The next phase in the Model Prayer is "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus is teaching that you are to plead for obedience to the will of God. This should affect your praying in two ways.

First, you are to pray for your personal obedience to God's will. God's will for your life is good, acceptable, and perfect (**Romans 12:1-2**). It is to be the great desire of your life, your daily pursuit. You are to plead that His purpose for your life will be done. You should plead that He will pour out His grace and power on you so that you can do His will. You are to call on Him to remove any obstacles to that obedience. You are to ask that your obedience to His will should mirror that in heaven.

Yet, you are also to pray for the obedience of others. You are to plead that others will obey God's will as it is in heaven. It is actually praying for God's will to be done in this world. This may apply to individuals or situations. The purpose of prayer is not getting our will done but getting God's will done on earth. It is through the prayers of His people that God accomplishes His will on this earth. Through your praying, God works out His purposes. This should make you diligent to pray for other individuals and situations in your city, state, nation, and world.

When Jesus says to pray "Your will be done," He is teaching that you are to pray for God's will in homes, schools, governments, and institutions. It is pleading for everything to bring glory to God and to carry out His will. God's will is not confined to "spiritual" matters. It has to do with all of life. Therefore, your praying has to cover institutions and situations. You can make a difference in the schools, the government, the churches, the economy, and the military.

This phrase of the Model prayer should cause you to ask the following questions about your prayer life:

When I ask for God's will to be done in my life, is this truly the desire of my heart or is it an empty ritual in my prayer life? (The reason that you need to ask yourself this question is to see how bold you are in your praying. There has to be a balance between boldness and submission to the will of God. Sometimes when we pray, "Your will be done," it is true submission to God's will. Yet, sometimes it is a lack of faith or spiritual laziness. Ask the Holy Spirit to search you concerning this. Plead with Him to teach you the balance between boldness and submission.)

- Am I searching God's Word in order to discover His will and to pray for His will to be done? Am I pleading for God's grace and power to do His will?
- How submissive am I to God's will concerning my prayer requests? Do I listen for God's will concerning my prayer requests? Am I willing to change my prayer requests as the Spirit leads?
- Am I pleading for God's will to be done in the major issues of the day? Am I praying for God's purpose to be accomplished in the issues and the institutions of the times?

Seeking The Father's Provision

The next phrase in the Model Prayer is "Give us this day our daily bread." By using this phrase, Jesus is teaching you your need to depend on God through prayer. Prayer is depending on God by asking of Him and seeking Him.

God is the Source of blessings in your life, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). It is God who blesses you richly and daily. All the blessings you receive come from God. He blesses you so faithfully that you should be careful to remember this, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 103).

The testimony of Scripture is that God is your Provider. His name "Jehovah-jireh" means, "the LORD will provide" (Genesis 22:14). It is God who provides for you. He uses different means for doing this. Yet, it is He that takes care of you and meets your needs. He is the Fountain of all that you need and desire.

Since God is the Source and the Provider of all your blessings and needs, you must depend on Him. How do you depend on God? You depend on Him through prayer. Through prayer, you seek and receive from Him what you need and what you desire. This phrase in the Model Prayer corresponds with Jesus' teaching in **Matthew** 7. In **Matthew** 7:7-8, Jesus declares, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." Jesus is teaching that one has to ask, seek, and knock in order to receive from God. God is the Source and the Provider. Yet, you receive from Him by asking of Him.

Your heavenly Father loves you; He wants to bless you. He longs to give you good and perfect gifts. Yet, you must seek Him and ask Him. The Word of God says in **Matthew 7:11**, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" It is important that you notice the last phrase of **Matthew 7:11**, "give good things to those who ask Him". He gives good things to those who ask Him. He blesses those who depend on Him through prayer.

An even more explicit expression of this truth is found in **James 4:2**, "You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask." This text teaches that you must ask in order to receive. Humble dependence on God means seeking Him for things that you need and that you desire. It is bringing your needs and desires to your Father so that He can bless you according to His will and purpose.

In this part of the Model Prayer, Jesus is instructing you to seek God concerning your needs and desires—physical, spiritual, emotional, or financial. You are to express and detail your needs before your heavenly Father who has the power and wisdom to grant you your needs and desires. He is the Source and Provider of all your blessings. It is only right and good to seek Him concerning your needs and desires. He wants you to cast all your cares and concerns on Him because He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).

This phrase in the Model Prayer should cause you to examine your prayer life in the following areas:

- Am I openly and honestly bringing my needs to my heavenly Father?
- Am I consistently bringing my needs to my heavenly Father?

- Am I expressing the desires of my heart to my heavenly Father?
- Am I truly depending on my heavenly Father through prayer or am I attempting to meet my own needs and work out the details of my life on my own?
- When I have a need, what is my first response: worry, look for a way to meet the need, or pray?

Seeking The Father's Forgiveness

Jesus continues His teaching on prayer by giving the phrase, "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Jesus is spelling out your need to confess your sins to the Father. Sin is still a reality for the child of God. The Christian is vulnerable to sin in his or her attitudes, words, and actions. And, sin in the life of a Christian is an abomination to God. It is still rebellion in the sight of God. Sin is no less sinful in the life of a believer. It is much worse. The believer must deal with it.

The Word of God declares that you are to deal with your sins by confessing them to your Father, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us ours sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). You need to have a daily, ongoing awareness of your sin that is accompanied by regular confession of sin. Your heavenly Father wants you to come clean. He yearns for you to confess your sin on a daily basis.

It is interesting that the request for forgiveness follows the request for daily bread in the Model Prayer. There is a distinct reason for this. Your confession of sin should equal or surpass your bringing your needs and requests to God. Too many times we focus more on our needs and desires than the confession of our sin. The unavoidable truth is that your greatest need is to deal with your sin and live in a right relationship with God. Your desire to confess sin and come clean with God should surpass your desire for God to grant your prayer requests. Just as you bring your needs and desires to God, you should also bring your sins with a humble and repentant spirit. In fact, it is useless to bring your needs and desires to God when you cherish and harbor known sin in your life, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).

When Jesus instructs you to pray, "Forgive us our debts," He is teaching you to confess your sins to the Father. Yet, when He adds, "as we forgive our debtors," He is requiring you to pray for a forgiving spirit. Forgiving others flows out of being forgiven by God. The only proper response of those forgiven by God is to forgive those who hurt and offend. Jesus does not want anyone to misunderstand so He states this truth clearly and powerfully in Matthew 6:14-15, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Startling words, aren't they? Jesus leaves no room for doubt with these words.

The theologian Augustine called this phrase of the Model Prayer "the terrible petition." He realized that if you pray "Forgive us our debts *as we forgive our debtors*" with an unforgiving spirit, you are actually asking God not to forgive you. You are asking God to treat you in the same way that you treat others. You are literally praying, "Father, I want you to deal with me in the same way that I deal with others." Charles Spurgeon states the seriousness of this phrase by writing, "Unless you have forgiven others, you read your own deathwarrant when you repeat the Lord's Prayer."

Jesus is using this phrase to teach you the necessity of praying for a forgiving spirit. He wants you to walk in a spirit of forgiveness. Walking in a spirit of forgiveness means that you develop your ability to release others from the debt they owe you and then to freely love and minister to them. Forgiveness is not an occasional activity for the child of God. It is a permanent attitude of the believer. This can be developed through praying for a forgiving spirit.

This phrase from the Model Prayer should cause you to ask the following questions about your prayer life:

- Am I confessing and repenting of my sin on a regular basis?
- Do I submit myself to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to search me and convict me of sin on a regular basis?
- When I confess sin, is it from the heart or is it simply going through the motions?
- Am I harboring unforgiveness toward anyone?
- Am I pleading with God to give me a forgiving spirit?

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Seeking The Father's Protection

In the Model Prayer, Jesus is teaching you how to seek your Father who has saved you and adopted you. Another aspect that you are to cover when praying to your Father is found in the phrase, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Through this phrase, Jesus is guiding you to ask for your Father's protection from temptation and Satan.

The first part of the Model Prayer deals with the character and greatness of God—His name, His kingdom, and His will. The next part focuses on man and his need—for daily bread, for forgiveness, and for protection. The first part of this prayer shows us how powerful and mighty God is. The second part shows us how weak and vulnerable man is. Nowhere is this more evident than in the phrase, "And do not lead us into temptation."

This phrase does not mean that God tempts the believer to sin. The Word of God is clear and plain that God does not tempt anyone to sin, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'' for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone" (James 1:13). By this phrase, Jesus is teaching you to pray for God's protection against temptation. He is directing you to pray that temptation will not overwhelm you and conquer you.

Jesus is teaching you to pray for God's preserving power in the midst of temptation. Every believer is going to face temptation. This is a reality for every believer, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man" (1 Corinthians 10:13). You are going to be exposed to temptation.

The key then is to pray for God's preservation and protection. It is praying, "Father, preserve me from the temptation that will bring me under its sway and cause me to fall." You can receive God's protection through this kind of praying. Listen to the last part of 1 Corinthians 10:13, "But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." You are to pray that will deliver God you from overpowering temptations because you are weak and are liable to fold under severe temptation. God will honor this type of praying because He is a faithful God who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear.

You should also pray for protection from Satan. Satan is the great adversary of the child of God. Satan has an army of demons who are committed to carrying out his devious purposes. It is his purpose to hinder and destroy believers (John 8:44, 10:10).

This phrase confirms Satan's power. He is a powerful being who desires to tempt and to attack the child of God. It also reveals your weakness. You cannot stand on your own against Satan and his demons. You must have the Father's protection. Yet, it also exalts the power of God. He has the greater power. He and He alone can deliver you from the temptations and the attacks of the devil. No one and nothing else but the power of God can rescue you from the wicked schemes of the enemy.

The praying that pleases God calls for protection from the forces of evil. It is acknowledging your weakness and praying for God to deliver you from the schemes of the enemy. It is also acknowledging the weakness of others and pleading for God to deliver them. Too many times believers forget about the spiritual warfare that is going on around them. You are in war. The believers that you know are in a war. It is essential that you pray for God's deliverance from the attacks of Satan and his demons. Your Father desires that you accept and appropriate through prayer the victory that Christ has won on the cross. You can experience this victory through standing firm in prayer and the Word. The daily prayer life of the believer must include this if it is going to line up with Jesus' teaching in the Model Prayer.

This phrase in the Model Prayer should cause you to examine your prayer life with the following questions:

- Do I pray for protection from temptation? Have I developed a self-sufficient spirit concerning temptation?
- Do I ask God to reveal to me those areas that I am the most vulnerable? Do I pray for His strength and power to deal with these vulnerable areas?
- Do I pray for God's protection from Satan and his demons? Am I pleading for discernment concerning his schemes in my life? Have I developed a self-sufficient spirit concerning

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- Satan and his attacks? Have I fallen for the lie that Satan has nothing to do with me?
- Do I seek to pray for the protection of others?

Seeking The Father's Honor

The final phrase of the Model Prayer is, "For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen." This part of the Model Prayer teaches you to pray for the honor of God. God's honor is described in three ways here:

The kingdom-God is the King over all people and circumstances. He is sovereign over all. He reigns and rules over everything. All things are under His control.

The power-God has the power to do all that He has purposed. He can do anything He pleases. All His acts are done without effort. He puts out no energy that has to be replaced. He needs no renewal of strength because He is the God of all power.

The glory-This is the manifestation of God's greatness. It is the revelation of His splendor. He is an awesome God.

God's honor is magnified even greater by the word "forever". God is forever the King who has all power and who manifests His glory. This phrase from the Model Prayer should cause you to examine your prayer life in the following areas:

- Do I pray with confidence because of God's sovereignty?
- Do I plead with God for great and mighty things because He is a God of all power?
- If God answers my prayer requests, will it reveal His glory?

Conclusion

It is my hope and prayer that you will examine your prayer life. Plead with the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you in this matter. Record the insights that He grants. Change and develop your prayer life through His leading and the Word of God. You have no excuse or reason to stay where you are in your prayer life. You can pray with power and effectiveness. Prayer is learned (Luke 11:1). You grow in your ability to pray as you submit yourself to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Will you examine your prayer life? Will you submit yourself and your praying to the Holy Spirit?



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