



**Discipleship 101  
New Believer Lesson #14  
The Church - A  
Community of Prayerful  
Love**



Based on the Book,  
*The Divine Conspiracy*,  
by Dallas Willard

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**Introduction:**

*Our daily life in the world is the test of our communication with God in prayer. How often does the Christian, when he comes to pray, do his utmost to cultivate certain frames of mind, which he thinks will be pleasing. The hour of prayer is only a small part of the daily life. God's opinion of what I really am and desire is not based on the feeling I conjure up, but on the tone of my life during the day. My relationship with God is part of my relationship with men.*

*Andrew Murray, With Christ in the School of Prayer*

**A Community of Prayer:**

Jesus words in [Matthew 5-7](#) describe a body of believers, the church, which is to be a community of prayerful love. If you don't always see it as such, you are now here as an apprentice, to bring that to pass in your own unique and individual way. In order to be such a loving community, it will take God's kingdom to break into our regular, daily lives, with God entering into relationships via your prayers.

Prayer is more than memorizing a set of words or statements. Prayer is more than blocking out a chunk of time and giving God a list of requests. Prayer is also much more dynamic and alive than calling out to God, but refusing to take any action on our own. As Dallas Willard says, what we need for kingdom living is not just a prayer life; kingdom living requires a **praying** life.

The idea of "kingdom" is the key to a life of prayerful love. A kingdom describes what one controls, or the effective range of control. We all have "kingdoms" of one kind or another – although most of our "kingdoms" are pretty small. For instance, my kingdom dictates that if you get into my car, you will not have mud on your shoes – period. My rule and authority over my car's interior will not stand for mud on the floor; that is a definite range of what I have control over. My car is my kingdom and it has rules and expectations for all who enter.

God's kingdom is a little bigger and much more important. In his kingdom, the effective range of what he controls has been passed on to us disciples or apprentices. We are to carry that effective control around as we walk about this world. God has given us that important responsibility, but we are to seek God's direction every day via prayer, and the heart of prayer is simply asking and receiving. Obviously this requires great control, because people often ask for things that are not good and often are just plain wrong.

There is a strong connection between our requests to other people and our requests to God. As Andrew Murray said in the introduction, our relationship with God is part of our relationship with all men. Integrating our daily life and our prayer life is important for the apprentice of Jesus to bring the rule and reign of God’s kingdom, the effective range of his control, into more and more of our world.



What “kingdoms” do you try and control? Consider how you can enlarge God’s kingdom, his control, over the areas of your life you influence – what do you expect to see changing as you bring God’s kingdom more and more into your daily activities?

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**Kingdom Control:**

At the beginning of [Matthew chapter 7](#), Jesus gets right into the means by which we sometimes talk to each other. In [Matthew 7:1-6](#), we see several teachings from Jesus on how we typically manage people – or try and control our own personal kingdom.

For instance, we often use condemnation as a means of controlling others, and hence, our own kingdom or control over them. Condemnation (judging in Matthew 7:1-5) is much like unforgiveness, and it’s a very popular approach – even, unfortunately, in the church. We also have a tendency to try and give “good” things to people (the pearls in Matthew 7:6) that we are confident will straighten them out, because we obviously know better than they how to fix their lives.

But this manipulation will not enlarge God’s kingdom – we need honesty. Prayer is based on honesty in the relationship. You can’t come to God if you are in rebellion against him. You can’t come to God if you are manipulating people around you by dishonest means. To come to God with such impure motives is obviously wrong. In fact, you will feel like [hiding from God](#) when you realize your error. You certainly can’t come before him and make requests in prayer if you are ashamed to be in his presence.

One good description of prayer is talking to God about the things you are doing together with him. It’s really not possible to talk to someone about anything substantive if you’re not involved with them in some way, but if you have a close relationship with someone, you can speak, ask, and answer in-depth and in detail; you can delve into intimate issues. If your relationship is distant, or you have damaged the relationship in some egregious way, good dialogue is not going to happen. That’s why prayer is an integral part of the “ordinary” life, done between close friends or acquaintances.

To live a life of prayer requires prayer to be in your daily life. “[Pray continually](#)” is what is meant by a life of prayer. There are special times for special prayers and even special preparations before some prayer (such as fasting, worship, or silence). Prayer also goes well

with action; there is much to be said for combining labor and prayer. Never consider prayer as a permanent substitute for action.



Be honest – have you ever tried to be manipulative in prayer? Have you ever tried to be manipulative in your human relationships? Can you see how this damages the relationship and therefore the ability to ask things of God?

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### **Kingdom Prayer:**

Prayer is a means of being in, living in, and walking in the kingdom of God. Kingdom prayer is seen beautifully in an Old Testament passage where God describes his relationship with his [“servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD”](#) (Numbers 12:6-8). Now that is a close relationship.

Jesus also teaches a similar relational closeness intended by God for those who love him: [“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him”](#) (John 14:23).

Prayer teaches us to reign with God in his kingdom. This would help to explain why prayer is a lifelong endeavor, involving hard work, perseverance, and consistency. Prayer is a vital means of forming character. As my friend, Pastor Ron Auch often says, prayer involves an encounter that changes the pray-er more than the prayer changes things around us. God has a double use for prayer, and we are the primary objects of improvement when we spend time with the Lord.

### **Prayer - The Power of Asking**

What power is there in asking? Plenty. You will see people walk across to the other side of the street to avoid a beggar, or look the other way to avoid a bothersome retail salesman. We do that to prevent them from asking us anything. We really want to avoid the question – the asking has power.

Philosopher and Rabbi Emmanuel Levinas said that the basic moral demand of a person is found in their face. Looking someone in the eye and asking of them is very powerful. The face is not just a portion of the body; it is the avenue to the soul of an individual. All you have to do is consider your family dog staring at you while you eat, usually pressuring you to submit to its request for scraps. Dogs look directly in your face – they know!

Remember [Number 12:6-8](#) above, where the Lord speaks face-to-face with Moses, as an example of this power of asking while holding the gaze of another. Consider also the Psalmist, who in [Psalm 27:8](#) earnestly seeks the face of the Lord in his requests.

Why is seeking the face of God so powerful? To seek God’s face means to seek to live in the manifest presence of God.

Read the Lord's Prayer ([Matthew 6:9-15](#)), and then try out Dallas Willard's version below.



Consider looking God in the face as you speak these words below. What will you ask of God?

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Dear Father always near us,  
May your name be treasured and loved,  
May your rule be completed in us,  
May your will be done here on earth  
    In just the way it is done in heaven.  
Give us today the things we need today,  
And forgive us our sins and impositions on you  
    As we are forgiving all who in any way offend us.  
Please don't put us through trials,  
But deliver us from everything bad.  
Because you are the one in charge,  
And you have all the power,  
And the glory too is all yours – forever –  
Which is just the way we want it.  
**Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13**

See you in Lesson #15!

[Note – This lesson can be downloaded in PDF format for printing or sharing]