



**THE
BRIDGE
CHURCH**

Our Need to be Noticed

March 6th, 2022

I wanted to begin with a little bit of trivia because I'm a dweeb, so why not? And I'm really interested in words. And I don't know if you know that Oxford Dictionary has a word of the year, and they've been doing this for decades. And I want you to, without Googling, I want you to guess what the word of the year was in 2013. Not yet. Let me give you some context about some other years.

So in 2006, it was "carbon neutral". Exhilarating. In 2008, the word of the year was "hyper-milling". Sure. Okay. In 2010, it was "refudiate". Not even sure if I'm pronouncing that correctly. In 2020, the word was "unprecedented". Anyone ever heard that so much? You're like it's starting to feel precededent—just regular old precedent.

Okay, so any guesses for the word of the year in 2013? "Stressed"? We should talk after. "Stressed". Okay. No, good guess, though. Anyone else? "Woke"? Is that what you said? No, it wasn't "woke". Solid guess, though.

Any other guesses? Word of the year, 2013. Okay, I'm curious to see if your reaction was mine when they revealed because the word of the year, according to Oxford Dictionary in 2013 was "selfie".

I remember reading that thinking, "We're done as a society. That's it. Culture couldn't get any worse than this." The next year, the word was "vape". So it got worse. It somehow got worse.

The word of the year was "selfie". That was on everyone's mind. It was typed X amount of times. It had gone up 17,000% from the previous year just in usage online. "Selfie" was the word of the year. Now, what I find really interesting is that actually, since that became the word of the year, do you want to guess how many selfie deaths there have been worldwide?

This is a little bit of a darker question. I'm going to get a lot less feedback, I'm sure. Anyone want to guess? Did you say a million? No. Okay. It was 330, which was, to be honest, it was a lot less than I thought it would be. I found that men were twice as likely to die by selfie than women. In 2016, Mumbai in India actually established 16 "no selfie" zones because it was becoming such a problem.

And as I read that, I had this thought and I realized—this is a little on the nose—but this is the thought that came to my mind: our desire to be seen by others is literally killing us. Our desire to draw attention to me and mine and what I'm doing is literally causing harm to our physical bodies. And this is a bit of an extreme example, but we've all seen selfies, right? We all know what I'm talking about with the duck face. Hopefully that's phased out. But here's a really common one that I've seen.

[Image appears of a woman photographed holding a hand; the hand appears to belong to someone behind the camera.]

This selfie is pretty common, and it's nice because it's romantic, right? It's like, oh, I'm on a lovely date with a loved one until you zoom out and you realize what's really going on in this photo. Not a real arm.

[Second image appears showing same woman holding a fake hand attached to a fake arm, posed to appear real.]

The fact that this device even exists is terrifying. In fact, I heard a comedian, who said that—he was talking about selfies—he says, I don't call them "taking a selfie". I call them "taking a lonely". Right? Remember when we used to actually be able to ask someone, "Hey, could you take a photo of me?"

And he says, "I think we're so lonely, we're just constantly taking photos of ourselves." And I think that's part of it. But I think there's actually a whole lot more going on. And that's part of what Jesus is going to get at here in the Sermon on the Mount.

And I think—and maybe this is overreaching—I think every single one of us, regardless of your Myers-Briggs, or your Enneagram or your personality type, I think all of us have struggled to some degree with approval-seeking, seeking the approval of others. And Jesus here is going to tackle that head-on. What I think is so interesting about this part in the sermon, Jesus moves from don't, don't murder, don't commit adultery to this week, to do give to the needy, do pray and do fast. And what I love about Jesus is here, he's standing in opposition of a sort of line-walking, bare minimum kind of faith.

I would say it this way: instead of asking, "what can I get away with?" Jesus is leading us toward "what must I get away from?" What must I get away from? So many of us live our faith how close to this line. I can't tell you how many times, as a pastor, I've been asked, "When does it technically become sin?"

I often have to say, "If you're asking that question, you're already in trouble. That's already the wrong question." Even in our righteous acts, there are still things at the heart-level that we have to deal with. So here Jesus talks about giving, praying, and fasting. We're only going to tackle the first two, and we'll introduce fasting next week.

And as we're not righteous by things we avoid, we're also not righteous simply by things we do. But Jesus here pulls back the layers of outward obedience, and he gets to matters of the heart. So, fair warning, it's going to get a little uncomfortable. Are we ready to go for it? All right.

Matthew, chapter six, verse one. "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets to be honored by others. Truly, I tell you, they've received the reward in full. But when you give to the needy"—*when, by the way, when you give to the needy*—"do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Okay, so just so we kind of know where we're headed, verse one is sort of the thesis for this section here. And I'm going to walk through each of these verses line by line. I'm going to intentionally not put them on the screen. As most of you know, this is a sermon that Jesus is giving on a mountain side.

And they didn't have PowerPoint, they didn't have screens, they weren't holding Bibles. It's an oral tradition, and I think there's actually something really significant to just simply hearing these words from Jesus, hearing these commands, these instructions for what it actually means to live in the Kingdom. And as I've been trying to make, the case is that this isn't just a smattering of quotes and like "hot takes" from Jesus. It's a collection. There's a rhythm and an order to the text here.

So the first phrase there is "Be careful," which just, again, is a rule of thumb. When Jesus says, "Be careful," we should pay attention. We should lean in like, "All right, what should I be careful of?" Now, the word in the Greek there is a word "prosecho."

He's saying, "Be careful about white wine. It's terrible." [Laughter.] No, a different prosecco. It means to be in state of alert, to turn toward. When Jesus says, "Be careful," it's not like a general like, "Hey, be careful if you ever encounter this sometime in your life." Like, "Be careful. Watch out for quicksand." Anyone, based on cartoons, who thought quicksand would be a way bigger deal than it actually is? That's like my number one fear as a twelve year old. I got to watch out for quicksand—quicksand and tornadoes, apparently. Then I moved to Tennessee.

So he says, "Be careful." Be careful of what Jesus is saying. Be careful of what he says. "Be careful to not practice your righteousness in front of others." So the word "righteousness" there is the word "tekiasunai". Can I hear you say "tekiasunai"? "Tekiasunai" is this beautiful word, and it actually has multiple kinds of implications. It's about a right relationship, not just with God, but also with others and also the needy. Specifically, it's about a right relationship with God, a right relationship with our community, and specifically those in need.

Now he says something following that, but I think it's really important for us to hold onto. He says, "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them." That's really important because this can be very confusing to us because a couple of weeks ago, we read, "Let your light shine before men so that they may see your good deeds." This could feel like a little bit of schizophrenic whiplash, like, "He just said that people should see my good deeds, and now you're saying that people shouldn't..."

Notice what he says in Matthew 5, "Let your light shine so that they could see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." The litmus test for the one living in the Kingdom and apprentice of Jesus is to ask, does this bring glory to the Father? Is what I'm doing, pointing people not to me, not to my brand, not to my accomplishment, not to my church, my denomination? As good as all those things are, does it bring glory to God?

Matthew 5, Jesus is combating the sin of cowardice. And in Matthew 6, he's combating the sin of pride. He's saying there is a time to hide and a time to show. In William Bennett's Book of Virtues, what I find so fascinating is there's this long list of virtues, but the one virtue that's not included is humility. I think the reason for that is because humility is not necessarily a value in our time and age.

Pride is. Pride is the virtue. It's the thing we often look for in leaders and teams here in our culture. It's pride, not humility that we value in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It asserts that my highest aim is self-actualization, to ensure that I reach my greatest potential. And before you email me, I'm for people achieving their potential, by the way. I'm all for excellence. I'm all for honing your craft. Absolutely. But I think Augustine was onto something.

Augustine once famously said that pride is the mother that is pregnant with all other sins. Pride is the mother that is pregnant with everything else that you see and discern as sin. You can certainly most likely trace it back to pride. Jesus isn't saying hide all your good works. He's saying, when you do them, don't do them for your glory, to draw attention to your website and your initiative. As good as all of them may be to be seen. The word for "to be seen" is "theothani", which is where we get our word for "theater."

He's saying, don't put on a show. Jesus, as he often does, isn't just simply dealing with our behavior, as important as that is, he's getting at our motivation. Our behavior matters, by the way. I don't know where we got this idea that Christianity doesn't have anything to do with behavior modification. When I read the Sermon on the Mount, he seems pretty interested in modifying some behavior drastically.

But he also says that behavior is not enough. There is a temptation to do the right things with the wrong motives. I didn't want to give this example, but I'm going to do it right now. I'm teaching the Bible. Would we say that's a good thing or a bad thing.

Most of us would say, "Yeah, okay, I think that's a good thing." The problem is you don't know my motivations for doing it, right? I would like to stand up here and say, "My motivations are 100% totally pure all the time." That would be a lie, truth of the matter. And I probably could speak for anyone who's ever on the stage. It's a bit of a mixed bag, actually. Yes, to glorify God, to serve our community. But also there's a part of me that really wants you to like me. Maybe even more than that, I want you to think that I'm smart or that I'm doing a good job.

We know that there's a neurochemical response when you laugh at my terrible jokes, like something happens physiologically that says, "Oh, more of that, please." What I'm doing, the action that's happening right now, many of us would identify as good, but Jesus says it's not good enough to just do good things. Where is your heart? And I say this as your pastor and any other pastor that you know or care about: stages are an occupational hazard for people in ministry. They just are. I love what we do. I think we should keep doing it for a long, long time. But there is an occupational hazard to stages and lights and streaming. Jesus says, "Be careful not to do those good things in order to draw attention to yourself."

Now in verse two, what I find so interesting, he says, "So when you give to the needy..." I'm not going to harp on this for a long time. Jesus assumes that's happening. Not like, "If that's your thing, if that's your heartbeat, if you're like one of those types of people, yeah, it's fine." He says *when* you live a life, a posture of generosity towards those in need. He's assuming that it's happening now.

The word "give to the needy" is actually one word in Greek. It's the word "tzedekai". And "tzedekai" is often the same word, translated both righteousness and acts of justice. In the biblical narrative, personal righteousness and outward acts of justice are deeply intertwined. May we not separate what God intended to be together. They are one in the same. And it's not just about money, it's about serving. It's about giving of our time out of relationship. A little bit of context here that I think might be helpful. So in AD 70, after the destruction of the temple, Roman general Titus just leveled the city, leveled the city and the temple.

Judaism had to sort of reinvent itself. The temple was everything. So without a temple, that means there's no more priesthood, no more sacrificial system. And giving to the needy, sort of in some way, replaced the sacrificial system as a way to make atonement. Instead of taking a goat to the temple, they would give to the needy, or they would bring a meal to someone in need. They would serve, they would welcome into their home. It became a key role in society. Jesus is pro-giving. But again, he's getting at our motivation.

Now, I want to geek out a little bit on this word "trumpet", because they didn't have Pushpay at the time. They didn't have automated giving. They didn't have cashiers checks. They didn't have any of that in this context. There was a giving box in each synagogue, and at the area at the side of the temple of the courtyard, there was a place called the Chamber of the Secret.

And people would go and drop off gifts that were designated specifically for the poor in that community. And the chest itself, the thing that you would actually place the money in was made of a ram's horn. And a ram's horn was used in many other contexts, like a trumpet. It would be used as an instrument. And so the poor would then come in later into that chamber, and they would receive the gifts that people had discreetly put in this chest throughout the week.

Part of what was happening, if you could imagine, a big ram's horn. People would sometimes come in, and imagine you've got heavy coins, right? You can either gently put

them in the horn and they kind of slide. What would happen if I chucked it all in there, or maybe one at a time.

What he's saying is it was very easy to make a big commotion about the giving that you were doing that was meant to be in secret. It was meant to be received by the people who really needed it to discreetly put the funds in there. And people apparently were backing up and they're shooting threes into this ram's horn so that everyone would go, "Oh, he's giving a lot over there. Look at that. Oh, my goodness, look at the generosity of that guy."

In fact, as the years went on, the Pharisees literally started attaching trumpets to their belt and would blow a trumpet, and the poor would come running. It's kind of like, have you ever seen the way that neighborhood children respond when the ice cream truck comes? It's chaos. It's beautiful chaos. But they would really blow the trumpet, and all the needy of the community would come running. They would gather and they would say, "Oh, how generous they are." And sometimes there was even a parade.

And Jesus says kingdom people don't live like that. They don't draw attention to even the good things they're doing. Jesus is saying, "Keep doing it, don't announce it, don't draw attention to it." And we don't typically wear trumpets around our belt anymore, typically. Some of us... But what are the other ways that we do this? I'm not knocking it, but like donations with our name on it. I mean, every Church I've ever worked at, sometimes the subtext: "biggest givers also have the biggest influence", right? I visited a church once and as you left the auditorium, there was this huge bronze plaque of the ten biggest givers with their name and the dollar amount on it, from the previous year.

I'm glad you had that reaction, because we're doing it next week. No! The last thing that people see as they leave!

Oh, what about the trumpet of social media? Again, I'm saying this is someone who's done it all. I've done all of this—the selfies on a mission trip so that people know that I'm doing good things with my time, that I care about these things in the world. Let me ask you, and I ask this with all the discomfort in the world, have you ever given a gift and not

identified yourself at all? I'm talking like a cashier's check, mail it from a different zip code, until no one.

It's so freeing. And it's also so challenging. Anytime that I've been challenged to do something like that, I'll be honest, I don't, realize how much I want someone to know. You do it, you feel challenged in a moment, you hear a sermon like this, you're like, "Oh, yeah, that sounds like a fun idea." And then as soon as it's done, you're like, "I really want the lights, the accolades, just one 'attaboy'." This kind of giving humbles us greatly. It reminds us that everything we have is God's and we're just stewards. That's it. It's not ours. We are managing his portfolio.

Now, I want to address this word "hypocrite" for a second, because this is one that I feel like we hear a lot. It shows up 13 times in the Sermon on the Mount. What is easy to miss is that the word "hypocrite" was not pejorative in the first century the way that it is now. Has anyone ever used "hypocrite" and meant something nice by it, or even just neutral? It simply means "actor". Like "actor" in a Greco-Roman drama. In fact, from where Jesus is probably giving this sermon, down the road in the Roman city Sepphoris, there was this huge theater. I got a picture of it here, this huge theater.

And I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this, but it's most likely that Jesus actually wasn't a carpenter. The word "tektōn", we've translated as carpenter. It really just means "builder". And there's not a lot of trees where he was from. So he likely—please don't get mad—he likely was a stonemason. He likely worked with stone. I'm just saying that as an aside, we can talk offline later. Some scholars even asserted that he maybe worked in this exact theater.

So when he talks about "hypocrite", he's talking about an actor, someone, you know—you've seen the sort of the two masks in different theater productions. The two masks is where this idea of hypocrite comes from. He's saying they're not the real deal. They're actors. We get this idea outlined in Shakespeare, and Hamlet, he says, "God has given you one face and you make yourself another."

"God has given you one face and you make yourself another." That's part of what this looked like in the first century. And what I find so fascinating is that his reason for not doing it is not the reason that we tend to give. Like when we talk about hypocrisy in the church, his reason isn't that it would turn people off. That's what you'd think. That's what I would think. "Hey, don't be a hypocrite because then people aren't going to attend your church. People aren't going to be a part of your thing."

He says the issue is about receiving a reward in full. He says, if you do it like these actors, if you're only doing it for approval, you'll get what you want. But that's all that you get if you're doing it for the comments, for the applause, for the likes, for the accolades. Jesus is saying he's not opposed to the reward. He's saying, if your goal is accolades, you're setting your sights way too low. If that's the aim—the applause and the likes and the attaboys—if that's your aim, you've set your sights way too low.

And then he goes on and says something really strange in verse three: "When you get to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." That's weird. I'm typically aware. That's a tough thing. As we follow Jesus, though, this is what I think he's getting at: the end goal is to grow into the kinds of people who live like Jesus without thinking so much about it.

Anyone who's a musician who has been practicing scales their entire life, at a certain point, you don't have to think about each key specifically. It becomes like a muscle memory. The point isn't like, "Hey, you should give more." It's like, "No, this is the kind of people that he's inviting us to become," so that when we give and when we serve and when we're generous and gracious and show forgiveness and mercy, it doesn't feel like a knockdown drag-out, like, "Oh, I really want to punch you in the face, but I guess I heard this sermon the other day, and I should not do that now."

It becomes muscle memory. Become the kinds of people that do this. Bonhoefer calls it self-forgetfulness, just to lean in, to become the kinds of people that live this. Our longterm goal is to become the kind of people who follow Jesus, are transformed, and naturally do these things not out of a schedule or obligation, but just out of who we are becoming in Jesus. Does that not sound like a beautiful image of the Kingdom? It's not

out of guilt. It's not out of some initiative. It's not because there's a hashtag and I really hopped on the wave. It's because that's just who I'm becoming.

Then he says in verse four, "then your father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you," which sounds odd to me because he says the motivation is still rooted in a reward, which is weird for us because we love altruism in the west, don't we? Which, I think it's an okay thing. But notice what Jesus doesn't say. He doesn't say, "Give to the needy because it's the right thing to do. Come on, you've been saved. You should give to the needy." He doesn't say what the reward is. So don't fill in the blanks either, okay? I've heard a lot of bad, like, "Oh, your father sees it, and he's going to rain down Lamborghinis and Land Rovers on my life." And that's not what he's saying here.

But he does say, "The father will notice." "The father will notice, and he will reward you." I have a four and three-year-old at home right now and one on the way, and I'm very aware that we come out of the womb wanting attention, quite literally screaming for it, right? The amount of times my boys say, "Watch me, watch me, watch me!" Part of what I love about that is often they say, "Watch me," and then they do nothing. Any parents used to that one? "Papa, watch me, watch me, watch me, watch me!" And I go, "What?" But he's like... [looks around silently].

I'm like, "You didn't even have a thing!" All right. Okay. That probably makes me a bad father. But what I actually think is we never really truly outgrow that. And I think what begins as "watch me" as a child grows into "notice me" in adulthood. I don't think we're like screaming, "Watch me, watch me, watch me do this thing!" But deep down, the engine of our heart is, "Oh, I want someone to notice. I want someone to know that I am crushing it physically, mentally, financially, spiritually, whatever it is."

It's an easy target, but I'll go after it. How about social media? If you follow me online, I'll just say this: that's not really who I am. It's part of it, but I'm curating all the best parts of my life for social media. I've even taken photos of my house, but if you could see what's behind me when I take that photo, it's just a pile of garbage cleared out so I can get one corner of the house looking nice so that you all think, "His house always looks like that."

And he's just always playing with his boys and attentive and, oh, my gosh, what a good father. Oh, our pastor." Yeah, I do that. Am I alone? Does anyone else?

We curate a portrayal of who we want people to think we are. Degrees, resumes, things, cars, clothes, phones, gadgets... We're obsessed often with looking good over being good, myself included. As an enneagram three, words-of-affirmation guy, by the way, this is like my cardinal struggle, especially in leadership.

There's a consultant at Gordon College, Paul Borthwick. He says, "Anyone who has ever taught or attempted to lead others knows the tendency in all of us towards exaggerating our depth of character while treating leniently our flaws. The Bible calls this tendency hypocrisy. We consciously or subconsciously put forward a better image of ourselves than really exist. The outward appearance of our character and the inner reality (that only God, we, and perhaps our family members know) do not match. Does anyone feel that? Anyone running for the door? So how do we break free?

Here's a simple challenge: go do something Jesus-y and then don't tell anybody. That's it. Go do something Jesus-y and don't tell anybody. And by the way, don't mask it as a praise report in your next prayer circle. Okay? Listen, I've been around Christian folk for a while. We've all: "Just a quick praise report. I made a pretty big donation, and I'm just feeling really good about the generosity that I modeled and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." Don't do that. Don't mask it and couch in some religious language. Go do something Jesus-y. Tell no one. Do it in secret and feel the Father smiling at you, just simply living in the Kingdom.

You're not earning his love—you already have it. Let that smile be enough and feel the weight of this bondage of what everyone else thinks begin to fall off your shoulders. I'm telling you, it's a game changer.

Okay, I have two minutes left and half the passage. Here we go.

Matthew, chapter six, verse five. And I promise we'll fly. "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites again, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly, I tell you, they have received the reward in full. But when you pray,

go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like the pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Don't be like them. Your father knows what you need before you even ask."

So again, Jesus is wanting for us to look beyond our present reality to a coming Kingdom. He's wanting us to get out of a religious routine and into a beautiful exchange of genuinely loving God and others. Now, we read verse five, and we think, "Easy-peasy. I don't even want to pray on street corners. So check, right?" That's not even appealing to us. That's easy for us to give ourselves a pass. But Jesus is always speaking to something deeper.

We've talked about this before, but the Jews actually had a practice that they would pray three times a day, wherever they were at, whatever they were doing. By the way, there were three designated times they would stop everything and pray. And there was actually a rabbinic rule, "Do not pray loudly." If you're at the market, if you're around a crowd of people, don't do it to draw attention to yourself, because there's a lot of opportunity for performance-driven prayer.

Jesus isn't mad that they're praying. He's getting at their motive when they do. He says, the reward is whatever you get—cheap, small, short-lived applause for being so spiritual. And Jesus is subtly correcting this idea, and he's deconstructing their paradigm.

Now when he says, "Close the door", he's being, I think, hyperbolic. Essentially, he's saying, "Go somewhere private." We know this at a human level. Our most intimate relationships, think about the most intimate relationships you have. That intimacy, my guess, was forged in private, not in front of a crowd of people. The closest relationships that you have were probably a lot of one-on-one, a lot of tears, a lot of forgiveness, a lot of working through issues. This is why when Jesus says "Father", this is revolutionary. You didn't speak of God that way. For Jesus, it's about this intimacy.

I know for so many of us, the word "father" is so complicated, and just please just hear my heart, I understand that maybe your old man was a jerk or worse or absent. Maybe God

wants to redeem that word "father" in your life, but he wants us to know it's a relationship. It's an intimate term so that you're not only just simply being welcomed by a King, you're being embraced by dad. That's the invitation in prayer.

He says, "Don't babble." Don't use too many words. In fact, there was a pretty common belief system among what you call the pagans. And they would practice, blatant worship of other gods. And the pagan rule of thumb was that you needed to find a way to communicate how sincere you were in prayer, which could mean screaming, cutting yourself, babbling, repetition, ripping of the clothes, anything to get the god's attention.

And this prayer was marked by desperation that turned these gods into begrudging givers. Jesus says, "Don't be like that." This is the Father we're talking about. He's attentive. He knows what we need before we do. He's family.

Dallas Willard puts it this way: The pagans do not understand that prayer to the God of Israel, the living and personal God of the universe, is intelligent conversation about matters of mutual concern." Prayer is intelligent conversation about matters of mutual concern. You don't have to flag Him down with fancy language. Prayer is not like a flare gun, like, "I got to work in a 'shekinah' in there; otherwise God won't listen to me." He's a dad.

And he's not saying, "Don't keep asking." In fact, in a couple of weeks, he says, "Ask. He's ready." And I've struggled to believe this, which feels weird to say in ministry. If I'm honest, I've struggled to believe this. I think God loves me, but I'm not so sure he likes me. I'm kind of like an unwanted house guest in God's home. Jesus is saying that nothing could be further from the truth.

The issue isn't about standing. It's not about street corners. It's less about what our bodies are doing and more about where our heart is at. So let me ask this question: do my prayers in secret and public sound anything alike? Do they sound anything alike? D.L. Moody said, "A man who prays much in private will make short prayers in public."

It's the same principle. Are we saying these things in order to earn and garner the attention affection of the people around us? Do we load on vocabulary? Do we use catchy phrases and we pray for hedges of protection, even though we don't understand why shrubbery has anything to do with this? [Laughter.] Or is it us just running into the arms of dad? He's not talking about —he's talking about aimlessness. Don't keep on these words. You don't have to do that.

Just come to dad. Come to dad. Now, I'm not going to unpack this at all because I think actually what I'd love to do sometime in the future is to do a whole series on prayer. But I want to read it over us because I think it's important.

Matthew 6:9-13. "This, then, is how you should pray. Our Father, (our dad, our Abba) in heaven, hallowed be your name (holy, separate, other is your name). Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, (not our weekly, not our monthly, and we depend on you every single day) and forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Here's the beauty of this prayer. It's not a formula, but a framework. It begins just with intimacy: "Just dad. I just need to be with dad." It leads us to worship: "Hallowed is your name, not mine." It's about allegiance. We will always be tempted to build our own kingdoms, our own brands, our own accomplishments. It's submission: "Your will, God, not mine."

Petition is often where I start, though. Can anyone relate to that? It's usually like the first words out of my mouth: "God, would you please do this? Come on, hurry up. I need this."

Out of that comes confession and then deliverance. Jesus tells us to pray for daily bread (even when we'd rather have a Costco relationship with God), to depend on him as a father. And in so doing, we reject the world's frenzy and drive to accumulate, because fear drives to control what love drives to trust. And this prayer builds because if we don't see God as Father and holy, we'll never surrender ourselves to his will. An unsundered heart leads to fear, which strives to secure our own bread.

So this is normally how I would end. Actually though, I wrote something to us as a community. This will maybe feel more like a blog post or something. This is sort of like a letter to us, I guess, because I think it's really important for us to remember. Ultimately, the goal isn't to be a better giver or to be a better prayer. It's intimacy with Jesus. That's the goal, the byproduct of which is a life of generosity, a life of mercy, a life of justice, a life of kindness. But those things aren't the goal. They're the byproduct. So I'll say this to us to close.

In a society of thrown elbows and self-promotion and "Look at me, I'm humble", by the example of the homeless Rabbi that stepped down from grandeur not to be served but to serve, which eventually led him to a thief's execution on a cross for us, Jesus is the King who got on his hands and knees and did the filthy, grueling, demeaning act of washing the feet of his disciples and without Instagramming it once. The beauty of the gospel is that it frees us to opt out of the rat race of trying to appear flawless, ever-astute, and void of shortcomings.

In fact, it even frees me, us, to celebrate the good things that God is doing in the lives of others because my identity is not ultimately rooted in the soil of self-accomplishment and preservation. You, my friends, are so much more than your greatest success and your greatest failure. The goal is not to become more humble or less prideful. It's not to become better at serving the other or simply trying to cut down on self promotion, because the focus there is still me. And that's little more than selfie religiosity.

The goal is to grow in intimacy with Jesus every time, because the byproduct of that closeness is humility, grace, generosity, and love. The next time I struggle to keep things in perspective, I want to watch a sunset and ask myself, "Did I make that? Is that me?" The next time the wind blows through my trees, I want to ask, "Was that my idea?"

Because the answer, of course, is no. And that's really good news.

Why don't we...? Let's pray together. God, I recognize that our struggles, they may look like a myriad of different things, God.

But what I find so freeing is that you see well past all of it. There's no part of our heart, our soul, our mind, our motivation that is unknown to you. We're not catching you up. We're not filling you in, God. For some of us, that may feel very frightening. God, help us to not be frightened of being known fully by you. God, help us to not live our lives for the short-term applause of the world but for the smile of a father who sees us and knows us completely. Help us to rest in that this week. Help us to rest in that for the rest of our lives. God, you are the one we worship. You are the one who loves us with an unthinkable love that we could never earn or merit on our own. That's grace. We thank you, God. We love you and we pray all these things in the beautiful name of Jesus, and all God's people said, "Amen."

Te duele la risa. Y este tipo llamado Daniel, y fue, como, masivamente estafado por su hermano de una manera realmente brutal. Y juró que si volvía a ver a su hermano, le rompería el cuello. Esa era la animosidad. Esa era la ira. Eso es lo que había.

Bueno, un par de meses después, este tipo Daniel, tiene un encuentro radical con Jesús, como un Espíritu Santo al revés, y se convierte en cristiano. Y sin embargo, reconoce: "Todavía no puedo perdonar a mi hermano". Hay una pieza a la que se aferra. Y entonces un día, al azar, ve a su hermano al otro lado de la calle. Esto es lo que describe Daniel.

Dice: "Lo vi, pero él no me vio. Sentí que se me cerraba el puño y se me calentaba la cara. Mi impulso inicial fue agarrarle por la garganta y estrangularle. Pero cuando lo hice y le miré a la cara, mi ira empezó a derretirse. Porque al verlo, vi la imagen de mi padre. Vi los ojos de mi padre. Vi la mirada de mi padre. Vi la expresión de mi padre. Y al ver a mi padre en su rostro, mi enemigo volvió a ser mi hermano".

Esto es lo que dice Lucado sobre esa historia "El hermano se encontró envuelto en esos grandes brazos, pero no en un estrangulamiento, sino en un abrazo. Los dos se pararon en medio de un río de gente y simplemente lloraron. Las palabras de Daniel merecen ser repetidas: 'Cuando vi la imagen de mi padre en su rostro, mi enemigo se convirtió en mi hermano'".

¿Podrías orar conmigo, por favor? Dios, sé que hay innumerables historias de mal que nos han hecho. Un mal legítimo. Hay vergüenza. Hay culpa. Dios, ¿podrías recordarnos que en el Reino podemos entregarte todo eso? Tu amor por nosotros no se basa en nuestra actuación para ti. Esa es una buena noticia. Dios, cualquier cosa, cualquier persona que ahora mismo, en este momento, estemos percibiendo como nuestro enemigo, ¿nos ayudarías a ver el rostro de nuestro Padre y de esa persona y de esa gente? Sea lo que sea, Dios, ¿podrías empezar a disipar la ira, el dolor, la venganza y la vergüenza? Dios, sabemos que eso no viene de ti. Por tu gracia, por tu espíritu, Dios, ¿podrías ayudarnos, capacitarnos para vivir en el Reino, en las formas invertidas del Reino? Dios, te agradecemos y te amamos, y te pedimos estas cosas en el hermoso nombre de Jesús, y todos dijeron: "Amén".