

Series: Conversations with God
Title: The Key to Effective Prayer
Text: Matthew 6:5-13
Key Word: Decisions
Preposition: Everyone can know peace in his/her life by making these decisions of surrendering prayer.

Good Morning everyone. My name is Chris Farmer. I am grateful to serve as one of the pastors. God is in this place. He is here to reveal his presence so that we can learn to love Him and others, grow to be like Jesus, and serve our world.

We begun a series entitled, “Conversations with God.” Such conversations are the key to peace. Paul told the Philippians *“Don’t worry about anything. Instead pray about everything and the peace of God will rule your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”* God says the more we pray the more peace we have.

According to Matthew, Jesus taught his followers to pray because He knew that it maintains peace in a chaotic world. Internal peace can easily be lost. One minute everything is cool. Then we get a phone call and we are stressed out. Uncontrollable circumstances, unchangeable people and unexplainable problems make many anxious.

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus reveals the key to effective prayer in anxious moments. He teaches us to pray, *“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”* This prayer of surrender provides peace in the storms.

What is God’s kingdom? His kingdom includes His plan and rule in the world’s history. God accomplishes His purposes through His kingdom. God’s kingdom is wherever Jesus is allowed to be king. When Jesus reigns as king of our lives, the kingdom of God is within us. In many ways the second phrase, *“Thy will be done”*

explains the first phrase, “*Thy kingdom come.*” God’s kingdom is wherever God’s will is done. So if God’s will is being done in your life, the kingdom of God rules inside you.

Today we are going to look at how this phrase, “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,*” can bring us personal peace. Understanding and applying this truth will change our life. We must remember that God is God. Accepting this truth works God’s peace in us.

When we make the decision to let God be our God then we are ready to use the key to effective prayer, Surrender. So what three decisions can we make to possess peace through the prayer of surrender?

First, accept God’s plan. Giving up our plans and accepting God’s plan ensures our peace. Even though it is difficult, we must realize that we cannot control everything. Therefore, instead of worrying about it, we can give it up and accept God’s plan. Resenting what we cannot change does not give us peace. Feeling guilty about the past that we can’t change won’t give us peace. Having a pity party about what we can’t change won’t give us peace. We can’t change some things we don’t like in life: like our parents or our looks or our talents--all those things. Therefore, the path to peace is acceptance of God’s plan. “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.*” Everything that happens in our life is within God’s will.

You may be asking, “What is God’s will?” Was it God’s will for a baby to die in a hospital because the doctor, who could have saved her life, did not arrive in time?

Was it God's will for the Gulf coast to be potentially compromised by an oil spill? Was it God's will for people to lose their lives and homes from a severe flood in Tennessee?

This gut-level question gets at the root of peace in accepting God's plan. In fact, many resent and hate God because they misunderstand His working in the world. Let me share with you three layers of God's will. First, there is the intentional, perfect will of God, then the circumstantial, permissive will of God, and then there is His ultimate will and purpose.

God's intentional, perfect will is best stated by Jesus when he said, "*It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones would perish.*" (Matthew 18:14) God never intends for anyone to perish. Nothing that happens in this world today is the will of God, in the sense that it is what God intends and plans to happen. So much of the evil, harmful and destructive things that happen fall within the second layer, God's circumstantial, permissive will. His intentional, perfect will though can be defeated temporarily by man's will. If this were not true, humans would have no real freedom whatsoever. God never intends for children in Haiti or other parts of the world to suffer from malnutrition, malaria, rape, or abuse. He never intended for Islamic extremists to kill thousands of Americans on September 11. God never intends for you to fail your final exam. We may call them accidents, human failures, sins, or evil. But they are never the perfect will of God. It is God's perfect will to reveal His love and goodness through the greatest injustice of all, the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is

God's perfect will for you to embrace His love that you may have peace and life everlasting.

God's circumstantial, permissive will God operates within our broken world.

Paul wrote, "*For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*" (Romans 8:22) Human frailty and imperfection affect all aspects of creation. Sin has caused a tremendous imbalance and imperfection in the created world.

In accidents, God wills that the laws of physics, gravity, and all other laws are working. God's laws are usually not suspended if we sin or are careless. They are not suspended if we are an innocent party in an accident. We live in a world ordered by laws. We live with freedom to make moral choices. However, God will not allow anything to happen to us that would defeat His ultimate purposes and his children.

Leslie Weatherhead beautifully wrote, "*Nothing can happen to you that God cannot use for Good.*" The nature of the tragedy will not be undone. However, the living God can work in and through us, changing the meaning of the event.

Paul wrote while in a Roman prison, "*I've learned to be satisfied with the things that I have and with everything that happens. I know how to live when I'm poor and I know how to live when I have plenty. I've learned the secret of being happy at any time in everything that happens. I can do all things through Christ because He gives me strength.*" (Philippians 4) He is saying, "I've learned how to be happy no matter what's going on in my life." Choosing to accept God's plan stimulates peace.

Remember when you were in school. The teacher would pass out the test, you would sit down and start taking the test and he or she would sit at the front in silence while you took the test. The teacher is always silent when the test is being given.

I suspect that is true with God. We maybe going through a tough time and God is silent and we're praying, "God! Why is this happening? What's going on in my life? Help!" God's silence is a test. God is saying, "Are you going to trust Me even when you don't feel Me? Are you going to trust Me even when you can't see Me, hear Me, or feel my presence? Will you accept My plan, My wisdom, My love, My goodness even when there's nothing emotional? Will you trust Me when I am silent?" We accept His plan by trusting the Lord even in His silence.

Second, agree with God's leading. When we agree, we surrender to the ideas or initiatives of another. Our agreement implies that we will go along without conflict or resistance. In some ways, it is surrender. We don't like this word "surrender". Surrender means giving up or forfeiting the game. It reminds us of another word we don't like: "submission". As we go to God in prayer, praying, "*your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" we confess that we agree with God's leading.

Every morning we decide whose going to run our life. It's God or I. Whose agenda are we going to follow today? God's or ours? Sometimes we think we know better. Some may say, "I ignore some verses in the Bible because they don't fit my agenda. I pretend that verse isn't in the Bible. I ignore it and do what I want to do." Some behave as if they believe that God simply exists to make them happy.

Usually, they're probably justifying something the Bible says is wrong. They're rationalizing in their mind what God says not to do. They fail to see that to rationalize is to make rational lies.

Happiness is doing what God wants. Several years ago, I took a group of students to a local grocery store to wash windshields. I really didn't want to go. I knew that I could be home with my family. I could see myself doing something more entertaining. But I made a commitment to serve others with this group.

I wasn't the only one who really didn't want to be there. Washing the windshield of a stranger's vehicle was not high on the student's priority list during spring break. Connecting with the public was a real emotional stretch for a few. But we gave up our fears, our self-interests, our agenda, to share a random act of kindness with strangers.

We went from car to car washing windshields and placing a connection card under the wiper blade, which said something like this, "We're a group of Christians who believe that if Jesus was walking the earth today he would be doing some random acts of kindness. We have washed your windshield as an expression of God's love for you. We hope this will help you see your way more clearly to the church of your choice." Then on the reverse side of this card, it gave some information about the church.

Later that week, I received a card, which read, "I was a recipient of your "Random Act of Kindness." However, I did not know about it until I returned home from the store that evening. After pulling into my driveway, I saw the card under my wiper blade. Reading it brought joy to my heart. After coming in the house, I read it to

my daughters and they said, “How cool to do something that makes Jesus smile.”

Thank you! It was so nice to tell my girls kind people, do kind things just to be kind! .”

She then quoted Galatians 5:22, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self-control. Against such there is no law.*” Jesus smiles when we surrender to his leading.

Finally, anticipate God’s care. We trust in His care knowing that as God guides He provides. The Bible says, “*You, Lord, give true peace to those who depend on You.*” Isaiah 26:3

Our life is not problem free. It’s always something! It is simply a series of problems. We have to learn how to have peace in spite of our difficulties. We have to learn to anticipate God’s care in the midst of problems.

We have problems because we live in a fallen world. We also have an enemy, Satan who wants to mess up our lives. We also create our problems with poor decisions. Finally, some problems are nobody’s fault. One time Jesus was walking down the street and His disciples saw a man who was born blind. The disciples said, “*Lord, this guy was born blind. Who did something wrong? Was it his parents who sinned? Or did he sin?*” That’s a common approach to problems. We find it tempting to point fingers at someone, parents, a spouse, friends, the government or ourselves. So the disciples asked, “*Who caused this problem, his parents or the man?*” And Jesus said, “*Neither. This happened so that God’s power could be displayed in this man’s life.*” (John 9:3)

Sometimes problems aren't caused by the sin of others or our sin nor by the devil.

We may have problems because God allowed them to display His Power in our life.

When this happens let's remember the great promise that goes with the prayer of surrender. Jesus promised, "*God will give you all you need from day to day if you live for Him and make the kingdom of God your primary concern.*" (Matthew 6:33) We can anticipate that.

Are you really at peace today? Or is there turmoil going on in your heart? Is it because you have not accepted God's plan? Have you agreed with His leading? Have you anticipated His care? What do you need to surrender? Aren't you tired of being at war with God? Aren't you tired of being in turmoil? You can have God's promise, His peace by making peace with Him. Try accepting, agreeing, anticipating? These prayerful decisions are the key that unlocks God's peace. 2177