



GROUPS LESSON | WEEK 2

Sermon: January 18, 2026

PRAYING FOR THE KINGDOM: ALIGNING WITH HEAVEN (MATTHEW 6:9-13)

Kingdom ground is gained when our prayers align earth with heaven's priorities.

HOOK

MAIN POINT: *Kingdom ground is gained when our prayers align earth with heaven's priorities.*

Q: Have you ever been terrified during the landing portion of a flight? Why?

Airplanes require great skill to pilot. Large jetliners are controlled by a frightening number of instruments in the cockpit. Landing such a vessel necessitates that a pilot has critical knowledge, experience, precision, etc. The plane obviously needs to be aligned with the runway to land safely. The unique aspect of this dynamic is that there is a lot of variance on the part of the plane, but the runway doesn't move. Its alignment is stationary.

Like the airplane, it is critical that all our instruments (heart, mind, hands, eyes, etc.) are oriented in a way that we are aligned with the priorities of God and his Kingdom (the runway). God's character, promises, and plans are unchanging. We have a responsibility to align with him in all that we do. Thankfully, we have the living Word of God and the Holy Spirit to assist us in our piloting efforts.

BOOK

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Talking Point 1: Prayer is submission to the will of God
Read: Matthew 6:9-10

The Lord's Prayer is one of the most memorized and recognized passages of the Bible. In Jesus' modelling of prayer, there are several themes that should appear in our own prayer

life. One key theme that is seen particularly in verse 10 is that of submission to the will of God. Take just a moment to consider the real-world impact of God answering this prayer:

- Q: If we were to pray these words, “Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” what might we be truly asking God for?
- Q: What aspects of His Kingdom do we want here?
- Q: And if His will is done, how does that affect you and me? Do I simply yield my desires and plans to God, or do I need to take an active role in the will of God?

Read: Colossians 3:1-4; Philippians 4:6-9

Paul reminds the Colossians of their identity in Christ and then commands them, based on that identity, to focus on heavenly things. This command is certainly motivated by the temporary nature of our lives, but it also stresses an urgency to make an eternal impact now. We have a responsibility to steward our short time on earth in such a way that we are driven by heavenly realities in our daily decision making. How you spend your time, who you spend it with, the words you choose to say, where you dedicate your finances, and what you do with the giftings you have been blessed with all are relevant to the conversation. These are the ways in which you either submit to the will of God or hold a tight grasp on your own will. Prayer is the beginning of submission.

As Christians we should pursue the things of God constantly, and prayer is a key way in which we go about this, as Paul states to the Philippians in verse 6. Verse 7 reveals that focusing on the things above also provides great peace, a gift from God. But the headline of this passage might be verse 8, where Paul gives a very practical outlook on what it means to focus on heavenly things. Our worldview shifts when we embrace Philippians 4:8 and allow it to transform our thought-life and prayer-life. Use these questions to connect these two passages from the great Apostle Paul back to our talking point on submission to the will of God:

- Q: Why does our new life in Christ necessitate a focus on heavenly things?
- Q: What is the connection between Philippians 4:6-8 and submitting to the will of God?

Talking Point 2: Prayer clears the ground before the work begins

Read: Nehemiah 1:4-11

Nehemiah was the focus of our last lesson, but we did not get a chance to analyze this prayer that came after he learned about the poor state of Jerusalem, but prior to him seeking the King’s approval to go rebuild the wall. Nehemiah’s prayer is filled with zeal and humility. He deeply desires to see his people return to a true worship of God, and he confesses his own sin, as well as the sins of the people. Nehemiah recognizes that his earthly effort to rebuild the wall is in vain if it is not aligned with God’s heavenly priorities.

God ultimately blesses the work of Nehemiah. God could have done this regardless of his prayer, but his prayer “cleared the ground” for the work to begin. Nehemiah came with surrender and laid it all out. This was not an effort to strengthen his own glory or to enrich himself, but rather to bring about physical and spiritual restoration for a people that once

were deeply dedicated to God. Nehemiah's prayer revealed his heart posture. Though his project was one of material goods, it is evident that Nehemiah was seeking the things above, the things of God. Even as he goes before the King in chapter 2, he prays for guidance from the Lord once again and determines that "the good hand of my God was upon me" (Neh. 2:8).

When we pray, we should have a heart posture like Nehemiah. We should be passionate about the priorities of God, surrendering of our own comfort and desires, and quick to confess our wrongdoing. This clears the ground before the work begins. This is applicable at the personal level in our daily decision makings, but also at a larger scale, when we take part in major Kingdom endeavors, like Gaining Ground. The two alternatives to this kind of prayer are foolish: pray like the Pharisees, who have a corrupted heart posture and desire to be seen (Matt. 6:5), or you could not pray at all. Neither of these options seek after heavenly priorities. One is a self-glorifying façade, and the other is a self-reliant disaster-waiting-to-happen. So, let's pray like Nehemiah instead.

- Q: What parts of Nehemiah's prayer stand out to you? In what ways is he "clearing the ground before the work begins"?
- Q: Why is it so important that we dedicate time to prayer before our Gaining Ground project begins?
- Q: When it comes to earthly/material projects, how do we still ensure that we are setting our "minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."?

Talking Point 3: Prayer depends on God's provision

Read: Matthew 6:11-13

Q: What are some examples from Scripture of God providing in miraculous ways?

All throughout the Bible, God provides for his people. His provision may not always look or feel like the parting of the red sea, though. The Lord's Prayer lists three ways in which we see God's provision at a personal level:

- He provides our sustenance (daily bread)
- He provides our salvation (forgive us our debts)
- He provides our sanctification (delivers us from evil rather than into temptation)

His provision in our lives should spur us on to be compassionate and forgiving towards others. Prayer is both the initial petition and the proper response to God's provision. We should seek Him when we righteously desire His provision, but we also should respond with Thanksgiving once we experience His provision.

Read: Philippians 4:10-19

Paul experienced the provision of God often. In this specific passage, God provided Paul with contentment and with a loving audience, not with material goods. Sometimes we need to shift our perspective to see the provision of God even in the things we lack. Paul often lacked food, comfort, etc., but saw God's provision in the preservation of his life and mission. He found contentment in being a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1), and so should we.

As part of Gaining Ground, we have a responsibility to pray in such a way that we are genuinely depending on God to provide for our church. In our own hearts, we need to pray for contentment. Gaining Ground is an undertaking that will require congregational generosity. In order to give joyfully, we need contentment with the provision the Lord has already given us to see that it is okay be “uncomfortable” for the Kingdom.

- Q: What can we learn from Paul’s method of dependence on God?
- Q: How have you seen God’s provision in your own life?



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Spend a few minutes discussing the practical applications of today’s passages:

- Q: To “align earth with heaven’s priorities,” how do we discern the priorities of God?
- Q: What are your prayer habits? Where are you lacking?
- Q: Where are you still trying to “pilot the plane” on your own rather than aligning with the priorities of God? What will it take for you to relinquish control?
- Q: Where does Gaining Ground fit within today’s main point?

Spend time praying for our individual hearts, and the heart of our church, to align with the priorities of God. As a recommendation, schedule a time to prayer walk with your Group this week, either around the campus of the church, or in a local neighborhood that might be better reached as a result of Gaining Ground.