

# **The Open Door**

## **Christ Centered series week 1**

### **by Chris Famisaran**

Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to gather together once again in a new year. Lord, be with us as we begin this journey. I pray that it will be a fruitful journey. Be with us all as we faithfully learn how to grow closer to you and share you with others. In Jesus name, Amen.

Happy New Year. How are y'all doing with your resolutions? Don't worry, I already failed, so. Oh, man, what a day to be alive. Amen. I'm grateful for the sunny weather, albeit a little bit brisk today. I'm grateful for that.

So I think before I even begin today, I want to share something with you. Over the last five to six months, I've been talking with many of you. Unfortunately, I was not able to talk to every single one, but I asked a couple questions. Number one, what would you like to hear from the pulpit? But also, what do you value about this church? Because internally, I have been thinking about what does this church really hold as valuable? And I'm not going to give those things away yet. You're going to have to come here every Sabbath to learn that. But there are, I think, seven principles, seven values at the Downey Church. And as I talked with you and shared and got feedback, I realized that these are seven core principles or values that I want to not just assume, but I want to bring to the fore and say, this is what is important to us. And today we're going to talk about a foundation of what does it mean to be here at Downey? What does it mean? One of the first things that I think is very important to many of you, and I firmly believe that should be central in our life, is the fact that we should be Christ centered. Is Jesus important? Should Jesus be the front of everything in our life? Should we be influenced by Jesus? Okay, so we're going to break that down in the month of January and over the next 12 months, we're going to flesh out some of these things. We also have some other topics. I know for our fall small group, we're going to talk about a topic that is very central to our church. I'm not going to give that away. You can probably

surmise what it is. It's not the second coming, although that is important. But I think that we're going to spend some time really digging deep and looking at things practically.

The second thing that I took from our conversations is you want more practical examples. So I'm going to try to do that. I am always growing and always looking for feedback all the Bees, albeit, please, please be kind when you give it. But no, I'm always an open book.

So today I want to begin the journey in 2025 of what does it mean to have a Christ centered life? Because if Jesus is not at the forefront of our faith, then I have to question myself. Well, what are we really striving forward towards and how do we do so? Because if Jesus is not central, I think it's easy to go off the rails pretty quickly. Amen. All right, so let us begin.

How many of you have heard of Anthusa? Anybody know who Anthusa is? I'm going to guess 99.9% are not going to know who Anthusa was. Okay, but she was a woman who had two kids and she lived in the fourth century. Okay, so I don't expect you to know, but she is a mother of a man by the name of John of Chrysostom. And John of Chrysostom was one of the early church leaders and pioneers. He was a preacher and had a very profound effect on the Christian movement. You see, Anthusa was born in 330 A.D. and she passed in 374. She only lived 44 years of her life. But in those 44 years of her life she was very impactful, especially amongst her kids. Unfortunately, at the age of 20 she lost her husband. She decided, I'm not going to remarry, I'm going to work, but especially to make sure I want to put my attention and devote them to my children. And because of that, John later writes, her example, her Christ centered example, was a large influence on him. John would go on to learn about being a student of law. He learned rhetoric, and most importantly, he learned more about scripture, about the Bible. He was ordained by Bishop Meletus and later became the Bishop of Constantinople. He himself was also a zealous missionary. He inspired many others to go and share Jesus with others. Surely all of that had an impact. By who? His mother?

You see, we're all, I hate to say this, we're all influencers. I mean that in the positive sense though we're all called to influence. Do you have influence over people as parents? Do you have influence over your children? As a spouse, do

you have influence over your spouse? Do you have influence in your work? Do you have influence in your neighborhood? We all have the ability to have influence and we're all called to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So what does it mean to live a Christ centered life? And where's the remote? So I think the first Question I have to ask myself is, do I allow Jesus to influence my life? And sometimes I love it when Jesus influences my life. And sometimes Jesus seems to be a distraction of what I want. You ever felt that before? I think we sometimes have to admit that we don't always want Jesus to influence our life because maybe there's something that we greatly desire or want or want to experience, and maybe it's not in tune with what Christ wants for us. Amen.

How many of you have ever tried to go off the wayward path and paid the price for it? Right. I think, though, sometimes we forget that we are called to pray personally for our loved ones and also the world. We are called to pray personally for us, to ask God, please, Jesus, please influence me. Pray for our loved ones, our friends, and pray for those around the world. What does scripture have to say about this? Okay, let's go to. I want to go to Matthew, chapter 6, verses 5 through 15. And many of you know this story, this particular part of the Bible. We've actually read it. But it's always a good reminder. As I was studying some new ideas I hadn't even really thought of, kind of, I guess some ideas about this particular passage were cemented. Let's go to Matthew, chapter 6, verse 5. Many of you know this as what? The Lord's Prayer. Okay, let me ask you this. Where is the Lord's Prayer in the whole Sermon on the Mount? What's its position in chapter six? And there's chapter five, six and seven of the Sermon on the Mount. Is it not in the middle and central to the Sermon on the Mount? I wonder if Matthew did that intentionally. Regardless, as you go through the Lord's Prayer, you're going to realize that there's also three distinct parts.

Okay, let's start at verse five. And it says, when you pray, don't be like who the hypocrites. For they love praying standing on the synagogues and on the street corners, to be seen by who? Others or everybody. And truly, I tell you, they've received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father who is what unseen. And then your Father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray, don't go on keep on babbling like the pagans. For they think that they will be heard

because of their many words. Don't be like them, for the Father knows what you need before you ask of him.

This is part one of the Lord's Prayer. We see the setup of what Jesus is trying to tell them. It's kind of like a little bit of a prologue. And he's telling the disciples and those who are around him. Look around you. Okay, maybe what you see is not the most healthiest examples, okay? You see the church leaders who are in the synagogue going on and on and on forever praying, and they're babbling and maybe repeating themselves. Or maybe they're standing on these corners. Trying to do what? To get attention. But how does that relate to your faith when all you're trying to do is seek attention? Drawing. Oh, I am so great. I pray on the corner and I pray all day long. How is that a benefit? Now, truth be told, they probably did that because that's what they were taught. But here, Jesus is trying to set up this idea that there is a better way. This is how you should pray. Now, when he says so, he says, you know, go and pray by yourselves. Is he saying that all prayers should be done in secret and by yourself? No, because if we look at the whole Bible, okay, there are plenty of examples, Genesis, Revelation, where people pray together. I think it's very important that we, especially as a congregation, as a group, as a church family, we should pray together.

So he then sets up the next part, the main part of this, okay, Verse nine. He says, this is what? This, then is how you should pray. He says, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. You know, I've never thought about this until this last week. Why did you know? He could have said, Father, and then it says, Father, you are in heaven, hallowed be your name. No, he says, "Our Father." There's a difference, right? Even though he is a son, he's saying, no. As a group. Let us. I'm drawing you in. This is how you should pray. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Our magnificent, sacred, respectful, we adore you. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus is basically stating, hey, the principles that are in heaven, may they also be the principles that we live by. Lord, give us strength, give us wisdom, give us understanding to know how to live out the kingdom. Not just when we get to heaven, but now. Give us this today. Our daily bread. When you look through the Old Testament, are there any stories where God's followers had to rely on bread? Exodus. When the Israelites left Egypt, they of course

complained. Hey, why did you bring us out here? For us to die. We're hungry. Moses, come on. And what does Moses do? He, of course, goes To God. And what does God give them? He gives them manna, right? But when God gives them manna, does he give them a week's worth, A month's worth? How much? A day's worth. Except for on Friday, going into Sabbath, got a little extra, right? So would hold. Would the bread last more than a day? No. And I think Matthew is intentionally bringing this up as a reminder, an ode to the past. When you pray, asking, Lord, give us our daily bread. Jesus is calling to look to God for dependence on our, our daily existence. Be mindful of that. It's God who provides on a day to day experience. Forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. You ever been in debt? It's the worst. It feels like a chain around your neck. And the more debt comes, the more weighed down you feel. Until either a, you pay off your debt, or maybe a benefactor comes in and says, I will pay your debt. And all of a sudden, what do you feel? The biggest sigh of relief. I'm so grateful that we have a faithful and gracious God. Forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors. Because just as we have been forgiven, should we not also forgive those who perhaps wronged us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one?

I like this prayer because it also kind of alludes to one of the famous templates, prayer templates that we have. And I know sometimes it can seem like it's an old hog and blah, blah, blah, blah, but there is a template when you're trying to figure out God, how do I pray? It's similar to the Acts model. Okay. A for adoration, C for confession, T for Thanksgiving, S supplication. I just, I would like to maybe replace that with the R just instead of Acts, call it act'r - R requests. Okay.

When we give God, when we call, when we go to God. Do you ever think about God? I want to just thank you for the God that you are. You are the God of the universe. You are amazing beyond anything that I could comprehend. Yet there's also this aspect where is anybody perfect here I'm not. And sometimes we have to say, Lord, forgive me for what I thought about that person. Maybe what I said, maybe how I smugly or mad dogged that person because they drove unexceptionally well. And when you ask something, maybe it's a good idea before you even request anything, maybe we should thank God as a good reminder of the goodness of God. What a God has done in the past. But also

when we request something, maybe it's good that we also come with an attitude of gratitude.

All right, before we ask God. So I want to do something practical here. Okay? Let's read this together. Is this okay? All right. Oh, we don't. I know we got different versions, but the Lord knows our prayer. Okay. And if you're struggling to pray, my encouragement to you is start here, okay? And if this quote gets boring or whatever, go to the Book of Psalms. There's lots of things that you can pray for. Use the Bible as your prayer model. But let's get together, okay? Let's start at verse nine. Okay? I know this is going to be chaos. Forgive me for those of you who hate chaos, but let's do this together, okay? Verse nine. This, then is how you should pray. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Amen.

Now he also the third aspect to this prayer, Jesus continued, says, for if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you don't forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Why do you think Jesus adds to that? Because I think Jesus knows that we can sometimes maybe be a little bit unforgiving, maybe a little petty at times. When somebody wrongs you, it creates this poison in your heart. And if you continue to dwell on it, is your life going to get exceptionally better? No, it tends to stay plateaued. If not goes down, give that to God and also forgive. Okay? So that is one aspect of personal prayer. Now, we've had that.

But I also want to just take some time. I want to have a moment of quietness. How many of you love when it's quiet? Some of us do. Right? Especially if you're a little more lean towards the introverted side. Don't want to hear any noise. I don't want to be around people. I just want it to be quiet. And then there are some who is like, no, I need noise. In fact, when they go to sleep, they have a little bit of white noise in the background. Right? I have a good friend where she grew up in a very, very busy city in Manila in particular. And she told me, I can't go to sleep without some sense of noise of a car driving by or a honk or this or that. And to me, that just that seems like anathema to Me, right? Because I want silence. And too often our lives are filled with noise.

When was the last time you just stopped? Even pause and think? And maybe for some of us, that's scary because we're running from something. Maybe. We tend to do a lot just to drown out what we're trying to escape from. But my friends, the longer you run, the harder it gets. And so sometimes it's good also just to pause and to be able to think, reflect. How can I tackle the problem that I'm dealing with? But most importantly, how can God help me in this? To be Christ centered is to rely on God in all things. Not your will, but the Lord's will.

So I want to do something really quick. I want to do an exercise. I want everybody to close their eyes. Okay, let's do another prayer. Lord, you are good in all things. Take some time now, just for a few seconds. I want you to share with God what is something that you are eternally that you just think God is so awesome. Lord, you are the God of the universe. You are amazing. You're beyond our comprehension. In our lives we sometimes mess up. And so, Lord, we come before you. We are broken. We confess our shortcomings, Lord, our sins. We know though, that, Lord, you are our redeemer and our Savior. So thank you, Lord. We thank you for the many blessings, even if it's just a small thing. Lord, the glass of water that I had this morning, even the little bit of sleep that I had, my friends, my family, the unexpected bonus at work, the thought of a new grandchild that's going to be able to come into my life. Lord, whatever it is, Lord, whatever you're thankful for, give it to God. Now as we've shared our adoration, we've confessed, we've given thanks. Now, Lord, we want to give you the things that are on our hearts. Lord, we want to give you the friends and family members, our loved ones who are sick, who are hurting, who are grieving. Lord, be with us financially because I don't know how we're going to make rent. I don't know how we're going to pay the mortgage. I don't know how I'm going to pay for the medicine, to be able to put food on the table for my children. Lord, I don't know how I'm going to put gas in the car. Lord, I don't know how to deal with the difficult co worker who's making my life miserable or the boss who just seems like a tyrant. Lord, help me to love my Neighbor who feels, who just seems to be unlovable. God. Whatever mental challenges, whatever emotional, physical needs, Lord. And even spiritually, there are some of us who are probably even just questioning God. Why am I

even here? I don't even know if I believe in you. God, help me to know and see you. This is my prayer. Amen.

Now that is a prayer that we ourselves can personally pray. You see, prayer is the foundation to building a relationship with God. Those of you, as I've said before, if you want to have a relationship, you have to have one. You have to have communication. And if you don't communicate, can you learn? You can learn and grow, but can you have a solid foundation in order to be able to know God? You have to communicate. And that communication isn't just one sided. That communication is not just God. I need you to help me pass this test even though I didn't study for it. Can God bless that? Especially if somebody asks you, hey, I need you to pray for me. I haven't studied and I still need to pass this test. My first thought is, no, I'm not going to pray for that. You didn't put the work in right? That's mean. I'm joking. Of course I'll pray for you. But can you expect an A when you haven't studied? Maybe in very interesting times, maybe. But that's the problem that we sometimes have is because God doesn't always answer our prayers when we want God to answer them. We'll get to that in a second, okay? But every relationship needs to have communication and prayer is the foundation to that. So when you pray, pray daily, pray regularly.

Now I'm going to share a story. I'm going to leave it with a start, with a caveat. Trust me, okay? Because some of you are going to be mortified in the middle of the story. Trust me. There's a story told and some pastors have told this. I didn't come up with this story, but there's a story of a pastor who has a family and they decide to adopt a cat, a little kitty. And one afternoon on the weekend they're out with the family and they realize that this cat, it's kind of a little scared and whatnot. So they need to build up its self esteem. So what do they do? They put it on a tree and on a branch and then the cat realized it has claws and he starts to scratch at the bark and whatnot and climbs a little bit higher up the tree and a little bit higher until the cat is out of reach of the children, and then the father. And then as it's going to, it goes on to a little bit, a smaller branch. The higher it goes, the cat slips and is holding on, barely. And of course, it starts to go, meow, meow, meow, meow, meow. And the kids are like, dad, do something. Dad's a pastor, of course. He has wonderful, great ideas all of the time. That's not true. He says, I've got a rope in the car. So he

gets the rope, he ties a little noose, and he says, I'm going to throw it on the top, and hopefully the noose will get to the top and I can start to pull it down. And it'll bend the tree because it's not a huge tree, right? It's flexible. So he does that, and he starts to pull the rope, but it's not coming down far enough for them to be able to grab the cat. So then he says, oh, there's my car. I'll tie it to the hitch and drive the car forward. You know where I'm going with this, right? So then the kids say, yay. Dad's got the best ideas. So he ties the rope to the hitch, and he starts to drive forward. And the tree starts to bend, right? The problem is he didn't tie it very tight. And as he moves forward, the line snaps. Tree was like this. The tree then went that way, and the cat didn't stay on the tree. It went that way. Now, half of you are probably mortified. Pastor, this is the most horrible story you've ever told. Trust me. The end result is sometimes not every prayer is what you get right. Sometimes not every story ends well. Trust me. Two weeks later, that pastor is down the road. He's visiting a member who lives two doors down. He knocks on the door and visits. And as he walks, and he realizes there's a little kitty cat in the hallway. And he knows that's his cat. Hmm. But he can't say that. He says, oh, how long have you. How long have you had your little kitten? She looks so beautiful. And she says, pastor, you would not believe this story. Two weeks ago. Two weeks ago, she and her son were in the backyard gardening. And her son, little Johnny, says, mother, I would really, really, really love a cat. And she didn't want a cat. So what does she do? She tries to avoid it. She says, well, Johnny, let's pray. They get on their hands and knees and they start to pray. And little Johnny says, lord, I would like a little kitty cat. Please Lord, make this happen. And what do you know? A little kitty cat comes flinging right into his arms. Pastor, you cannot believe. And pastor is like, oh, I can believe!

Now the story of, did he ask for his cat back? I doubt it, because that would be even more cruel to take a little child, little cat. All right. If you don't pray, though, this is what Pastor John, the guy I took out the story from. If you do not pray, coincidences will not happen. If you pray, coincidences will happen. If you don't pray, coincidences will not happen. It's important. Have a prayer life, okay? But also, again, prayer reminds us of our dependence on God. When you go to God, are you going with brashness? Lord, this is what we're going to do and everything, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. No, we go with humility

because oftentimes when we go to prayer, it's because usually we need something. And of course we go to God with humility. Lord, this is what I need. But yet, know when we truly go, the Lord's prayer is not, not a brash prayer. It is a prayer of humility to recognize you're placing everything, your dependence, your livelihood, how you treat others. Is it easy to treat others well when they've disrespected you? It takes humility to let things go and to forgive. Now, I'm not saying that just we'll forgive them for everything and then act as if nothing happened, right? If somebody has wronged you, then you need to take measures that you don't allow that to happen. But you can still forgive them.

Prayer reminds us of our dependence on God because if we don't depend on God, well, we can try to do our own thing, but it usually ends in unhappiness. Okay?

The other thing though is prayer is not a last ditch effort to coerce God. How many of you as parents, perhaps you pick your kids up from school and they say, mom, dad, I'm really, really, really hungry. It's 3:00. It's not 6:00. I'm really hungry. Can we go to McDonald's and get some french fries? And you know that's not healthy. And you know as kids, they need the most nutritious, best food ever. And maybe you'll make them some snacks when you get home. But home could be even three minutes away. And that still seems like a lifetime in kids understanding, right? And McDonald's is right there and they're asking, mom, please, pretty please, my life depends on in the next three minutes. If I don't eat, I'm going to die. And how many of you thought this is not the best thing for you do you ever make? I have to ask God one day, what are the craziest requests you've ever gotten? And you realize that is not good for that person, right? Let's not wait to go to God as a last ditch effort and try to twist God's arm into giving me something that maybe is not good for me. Now look, you all know I love fast food. You all know I love McDonald's french fries. They're the best french fries in the world. It's starch, it's sodium, it's salty and it tastes great. But it's horrible for you. All right, Amen. I will die on that. I don't go to McDonald's all the time, especially right now in this month. I haven't had fast food since December. It's horrible. But I told myself I'm gonna live a better life starting now. Once January's over, I'm still going back to get french fries.

We often term prayer though, and when we sometimes pray. Have you ever thought about how you pray? Especially when you need something and you try? God, please, I really, really need this. And if you give me what I want, please be at Sabbath every week for the rest of my life. How many of you have made that prayer? And as soon as God answers, oh, I forgot. Sometimes having faith means accepting God's response even when we do not like it. I'm reminded of a sad story where chicken soup for the soul. I remember this story as a child when we had family worship as kids and you know, we would read from the book and there's a story of a. I think he was maybe 10 or 12 years old and he had leukemia and he prayed this prayer and it stuck with me ever since then because at the time I was probably about 12 years old, he prayed, lord, help me to have the faith even if I do not get well, that still hits me today. I still get emotional about that because there are going to be times in our lives where what I want and hope is not God's response. And I don't know why. Okay, I'm going to let you know right now. I don't always know why God allows certain things to happen. But even, even as we were praying the Lord's Prayer, it talks about the fact that there's going to be even hardships in our lives. Not everything is going to be smooth and easy and sometimes meaning having a Christ centered prayer life and Just a life in general means that you're not immune to challenges.

Sometimes God can say yes, sometimes God can say no. And sometimes God may also say wait. The last part I want to focus on is we shouldn't just be praying for ourselves because our walk with God is not just about me, my relationship with God. Yes, that's wonderful. That's the standard. That's the minimum. What should we also be focused on? Not ourselves, but others. I think it's important that we need to be praying for others.

Praying for others is a form of love and reminds us of others struggles and needs. Okay, now, in the past, we've talked about. We did a whole series on praying for others. The 12 people you love. Okay, what was the first group that we prayed for? Your family. Oh, boy. Second group. Your friends. Third group. Church friends. This is not the enthusiasm I expected. And your unchurched friends. Okay. All right. This tells me I didn't do a good enough job. I want you to take your phones out right now. Take your phones out right now. Bill, start making your way down here as well. I'm going to have Bill share a quick

thought. Okay, Go to your notes. You talk about practical. I'm making you all do something right now. Pull your phones out right now. Go to your notes section and I want you to write family. Go down a couple lines. Friends. Okay? Go down a couple lines. Your church family. If you don't have a phone with notes, okay? Find somebody who's young and technologically versed and they'll help you. Okay? And then the last part, I want you to write down. You're in church. Friends. Okay? I'm going to come back to this. Okay? I'm making sure that you have this. Okay, Bill, come on up. I want you to find opportunities to pray for others. Now, Bill has a really great example, a practical example of how can you pray for others.

Couple of years ago. A couple years ago, I was getting my car washed. Know this big car wash across from Rives Mansion. Big car wash, long lines. And alongside the building they've got chairs where you can sit. And so I paid and found my chair. I'm sitting there and I'm watching the world go by. It's a beautiful day, not too hot, not too cold. Watching the people go by, just having a grand time. And an elderly gentleman comes and sits down next to me and he pulls his chair forward so that he can be in the sun, a little warmer in the sun. And he takes a piece of paper out of his pocket and starts reading it. And I'm paying no mind watching the people, watching the cars. And I look over, he's got this paper open that he's typed on his computer and printed out. And he's used big fonts, big block letters so that he doesn't have to read with his glasses. He can just read it, I guess. Well, it's like the newspaper headlines, right? I mean, you can't help. It's shouting at me, as you know, you look around and you can't help but see what it says. It's his prayer list and he is praying. Well, now, I can't look the other way. What's going on here? Right. It's got a whole lot more interesting than the cars driving by. And I was looking at his prayer list, and he had it broken up into sections. And there was a section with some names. I guess those were people he was praying for that needed healing or help with relationships or whatever. But there were some other sections that were really interesting because he was praying for the future leaders of his church. Not the current pastor, not the current worship leader, not the current youth leader, but the next one. I'm sure he was praying for the current ones, too. He was praying for his son's future wife that he hasn't met yet. He was praying for his grandchildren that he didn't have yet. He was

praying for his grandchildren's wives who may not even be born yet either. And he had such a long vision of what he was.... It wasn't just me and here and now, but he was looking into years down the road maybe. And I got to thinking about that. And I've been keeping my prayer list, and it's really helpful to kind of break it up into sections. Our 12 people or other sections that you have. And you don't have to pray for every single person every single day. Maybe some days you pray for, you know, the list of people that need things, the healing, the relationships, the money issues. And you go name by name through them. Maybe the next day you don't. You just say, lord, be with these folks. Maybe you go through the future leaders at the church, by position some days, and maybe next time you don't. Right? Mix it up. It's okay. You don't have to pray the exact same prayer every day. Get a notebook, write it down. Use your notes. Use big letters if you have to. It's okay. You never know who it's going to affect.

Thank you, Bill. Imagine if we both personally and as a family here at church, pray for one another, pray for Our families pray that we will be faithful to God. And what if we prayed for the world? And that's what I want to end with today. But does the world need prayer? No, just this last week alone. The heartbreak. We need prayer. So now that you have put the notes in your family, friends, church friends and your unchurched, think about three people for each of these categories, okay? The 12 people you love are the ones who you're going to influence the most. So where can you grow in your walk with Jesus? And who are those 12 people in your life that you need prayer? You've got your phones. Write three people for each category. Seek God daily in prayer and pray for those 12 people you love.

I want to close this message today with some time in prayer. I'm going to give a little bit of time for you to pray. I'm going to guide you through that. But I also think that we need to not just pray for us here, but we need to pray for the world. So let's go ahead and close our eyes. God, you are truly the greatest. There is none like you again, Lord, we come before you. We are broken, we are humble. We recognize that you are the Lord of our lives. Thank you again for all that you're doing, Lord. But as we take time, Lord, as we reflect, Lord, help us to choose, discern. Who do we need to pray for, Lord, to make an impact? Maybe it's the individuals that were also at family or friends that maybe we're

challenged with, Lord. Maybe it's somebody who's struggling in our life, Lord, we want to pray for those people. But today, Lord, I also want to just give a moment to lift up our own personal concerns, Lord. And Lord, as you listen to the prayers of your children, be with them, give them courage. Help them, Lord, to understand and how to discern. So go ahead now and lift your concerns up to God. Lord, we've dedicated our lives to you. We lifted up our concerns, Lord. We now look beyond just ourselves. We pray for our church family. Help us to grow as one family, to be Christ centered, Lord. Help us to pray for one another, to look out for one another. Help us to, Lord, reach out. Those who walk Lakewood, who drive on the five on telegraph and all of these roads around us, help us to be a witness. But Lord, we also now take time to pray for our community. Downey. We pray for our city. We pray for our county, our state, our country. We pray for the world. It seems like every day, Lord, it seems like something happens and it's easy to be unsettled. But we know and have the confidence that Lord, you are good. Help us to be patient, help us to be kind, help us to be loving. But we pray for the world, Lord, even in its uncertainty. We pray for those who are caught in the crossfire of war. We pray that you will help us to see them, to be mindful to pray for them, but also give them, Lord, what they need. We pray for those who are silenced, who are oppressed. Pray for those who are hungry. We pray for those who are unloved, Lord. We pray that your presence will be upon May you be a force, Lord, and help us to have the discernment to see where you are working and pointing us towards, Lord. Help us to have the faith to hear your calling and not just hear it, but follow through. And until we meet again next week, Lord, protect us, keep us safe. Help us to trust in you in all things. May we be a shining example. May your love flow through us that others may know who you are through us we give you all praise and glory, Lord, in Jesus name everybody said amen.

Grace and peace, everyone.