

**Music and Prayer**  
**March 6-7 2010**  
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We are in the middle of our Lenten Series on Worship: The idea was to take various elements that define our Worship experience, and explore how they connect with our every day living.

Two weeks ago, Rev. Hillary spoke about Scripture, God's Word that has the power to change our lives when we have it on our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.

Last week, we heard from Rev. Jan Walker who spoke about the Creed, birthed from contention and disagreements, but giving the community of God words to define our identity and our purpose.

Today, I will share my thoughts on two related worship elements: Music & Prayer. (Have the Music Minister talk about music – might be hard to get him to stop.)

Music is used in worship in many different ways: from evangelism to expression; from teaching to defining a church's identity.

But our focus today is on Music as a vehicle for prayer.

Now, I don't mean just about how we sometimes sing a chorus during the Prayers of the People (although that is certainly part of it). I'm thinking about something far larger. I'm thinking about how the songs are prayers that we use to connect with God.

For me, music helps me to connect with God.

Let's take a quick poll. If you have ever felt like you have connected with God, had a spiritual experience, through music at CCE, raise your hand. (That tells me how well our ministry is fulfilling our purpose)

So we know that music can help us connect with God, help us to pray, for connecting with God IS prayer. Our songs are our prayers!

And if this is so, then we need to look at this whole notion about Prayer.

Most people, if asked, get squirmy about talking about their prayer time. (poll?) Many of us feel like we can always do a better job spending more time praying.

Praying for most of us, is something we know we should do; but often lack the discipline to make it happen. Some of us view prayer as a spiritual duty to gain God's favor, perhaps, getting into His good books (as though we can earn God's favor). Or some of us view prayer as only those times that we need to ask God for something (as though God were some cosmic genie). Or perhaps some of us don't know how to properly pray (as though there are improper ways of praying). Still some of us view prayer as the thing we do at church only.

But what if we looked at this whole notion of prayer from a different angle?

Prayer is communicating with God. The talking; the listening. So that God and we can be in sync with each other. The essence of prayer is relationship; this “in-sync-ness”. Prayer is communion with God.

This is the nature of human beings: “Life without Jesus is like a donut...” We all have our Motivation that drives us to do things. It stems from a fundamental yearning to find fulfillment in X (power, wealth, prestige, significance, love, relationships, whatever). Yet, we find that the desire for fulfillment is never satisfied.

When God made Adam and Eve, he designed us to be in communion with Him. In our DNA, we are made complete when God is with us and in us. But when Adam (and the rest of humankind) sinned, and when we disobeyed God, our relationship with God was broken, and we were no longer in communion with Him. (All this is found in Genesis 3) But God in His love, saved us! The rest of the bible is the story of that salvation. You know it well – God sends his son, Jesus, to live and die as one of us; and that whoever trusts in him, will be restored to right relationship with God, and will be made whole. BTW, this is why we pray in the name of Jesus.

If our oneness, our “in-sync-ness” with God completes us and makes us whole, defining who we are and what we do, then prayer is no longer a mere duty to compete with other priorities that we have, but the driving force that determines every action that we undertake; When we are “in sync” through prayer, God becomes the primary Motivation in our lives. In such a case, we would be living exactly the Life that God intends for us to live.

So how do we pray such prayers that can so define all that we do? Let’s see what Jesus teaches.

In Matt. 6:5-8, we learn about how, not what, we should pray. We learn that our attitude is more important than the many words that we say. What should our attitude, our posture be?

Jesus uses the image of praying in secrecy. Let’s not misunderstand Jesus’ point. He was contrasting those who prayed for show, versus those who prayed to connect with God. He was not saying that all prayer should occur only behind closed doors. But Jesus was teaching not to pray to impress others. He was reminding us Who the audience is. (If songs are our prayers, this has implication of how we sing them...)

The other thing about secrets is this: Secrets are kept close to one’s heart. There is an intimate knowledge and vulnerability if I knew your secrets. Secrets are powerful – they have a strong hold on the person who keeps secret, because secrets are often about things that are most important, valuable and life changing.

When Jesus says to pray to God in secret, he is saying to connect with God with our innermost, intimate, vulnerable self. This is the level of intimacy he desires in His relationship with us. (song implication)

In Matt. 6:9-15, Jesus teaches the “what” to say when we pray. The Lord’s Prayer is a model for our prayer to God.

Now, I’m going to do two things at the same time. I’m going to talk about the Lord’s Prayer as a model prayer, while showing you examples of how the songs we sing correspond to it.

**“Our Father in heaven” - DECLARATION of RELATIONSHIP**

This opening is a declaration of relationships. Firstly, it tells us that God is not a far away God who wound up the universe and let it run on its own. But a caring father with all the attributes of fatherhood – the source of life, Provider, Protector. We declare this in our songs we sing “Almighty Father Strong to Save” ; or “Our Mighty Fortress is Our God”

Secondly, Jesus says “Our” father, not “My” father, declaring that our faith is not a private affair, but a communal thing. Furthermore, “In heaven” as opposed to “on earth” – God’s fatherhood stretches to everything under the heaven. He is the father of all things and people on the earth. We declare this in our songs when we sing “All the Earth”; “There Is a Higher Throne”

**“hallowed be your name” - ADORATION**

“Hallowed” means – holy, sacred, revered. The grandness and magnificence of God is beyond our comprehension.

Last weekend, I was at the beach. As I was standing on the shore, taking in the majesty of the ocean and the skies. I heard the roar of the waves crash on the shore. At night, I saw the gleaming moon shimmering in the ocean waters, and as I laid my head on the pillow, I could still hear the incessant crashing waves, declaring the unending power and glory of God.

“Hallowed by your name” is our adoration of our Holy God.

We sing of this in songs like “Holy Holy Holy”; “Indescribable”.

**“Your kingdom come Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” - HOPE, OBEDIENCE**

The kingdom of God, put simply, is the reign of God. It is not a place elsewhere, but it is the ruling, the lordship of God. This phrase is a petition for the ruling of God to be made real in our lives, on the earth.

It is interesting to note that Jesus did not teach us to pray to be taken to heaven. Instead, he taught us to pray to bring heaven to earth; just as God’s reign and will is done in heaven, may it come to earth.

The coming of the kingdom of heaven is something that God does, but it is also something that we, as his people, do. God effects his kingdom through us. Which is why we sing songs like “Lord Reign in Me”.

When we pray this phrase, we seek God’s will we yield our will to God’s. Surrender and Obedience. Two words that bring tremendous pleasure to our Father in heaven, yet so difficult to do.

Which is why we need the pray the next line...

**“Give us today our daily bread.”**

It is only in trusting and depending on God that we can have the strength, the grace, the ability to surrender and obey him.

This phrase not only speaks of the practical nature of God who indeed does provide for our food itself (feeding of the 5000), but it reminds us of how God fed the Israelites manna when they were wandering with Moses in the wilderness.

The Israelites were starving, and they complained to Moses, who then prayed to God for help. The next morning, there was white powder on the ground. “What’s this?” the people asked. Moses said it was food from heaven, and to only collect what they needed for the day.

Being practical planners like we are, they collected enough for several days too. But the next morning, there was another fresh batch of manna on the ground, and the manna that was stored from yesterday had gone bad.

God was teaching his people not just that he provides, but also the level of dependency he wants from them. To trust him even in the daily things.

Speaking of bread, Jesus is also our bread of life – you can make some more connections here.

This prayer we sing with, “I am the bread of life”; “Day by Day”; “Step by Step”

**“Forgive us our sins, as we also have forgiven those who sinned against us”**

It has been said that we are the sum-total of our relationships. You can have all that money can buy, but if your relationship with your spouse is broken, if your children don’t want anything to do with you, if your boss and employees detest you, you will be a miserable person.

But if your relationship with your spouse is a beautiful union, your children seek to model after you and please you, your friends are plenty and ready to come to you no matter what, and your boss and employees love and respect you, even if you were materially poor, for you will still be a happy person.

Since we are not perfect, somebody will disappoint you. But here is another news – you will also disappoint somebody. Relationships do need tending and restoring from time to time.

This prayer is about the restoration of relationships. Forgiveness is the door that leads us to right relationships – not only that with God, but also that with our neighbors.

The relationship we have with God is inextricably linked with the relationships we have with people. For Jesus, he couldn’t separate the two. It is impossible to hold a grudge against someone and still be in tune with God.

- “The Heart of Worship”

**“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”**

This is a prayer about God as Deliverer – how we cannot save ourselves. The force of evil is real. The notion of good and evil; right and wrong, seem to be in jeopardy in today’s “truth is relative” society. We are not even sure what is good and evil anymore. And we place ourselves in positions to be tempted. Sometimes willfully, but so often out of ignorance.

How can a fish realize that he is in the water? Only God can Deliver!

“Mighty to Save” declares the Deliverance of a mighty God.

Let me sum up.

Our songs are our prayers.

Our prayers makes us one, “in-sync” with God, who completes us and becomes the Driving Force of all we do.

How we pray is just as or even more important than what we pray.  
The Lord's Prayer is a model of our relationship with God.

### **Outside These Walls**

When we leave this place, this is what we can do:

- Christian music is readily available on the radio to be used as powerful prayer tools throughout your weekday.
- Use the Lord's Prayer to help your communing with God – expand each phrase on your own as you chat with God; see if you don't find your perspective of the world start to change.
- A plug for the Psalms – hymn book for Jews, songs for personal prayers