

# Being a People of Prayer

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[ 0 : 00 ] Okay, well listen, thank you for just the opportunity to be able to spend this day with you. It's been, it has been, it's always a little extra work that I don't mind putting in, coming to outside things.

But in particular, I'm just so thankful that you gave me, whether you know it or not, the opportunity to just spend the last few weeks thinking more about prayer.

So thank you for that. And whether or not, I mean, I hope you get a boatload of stuff out of this spiritually today. But even if you get nothing, I've been massively blessed just in my preparation. So thank you for that. The title of this session, and I'm not quite sure if it's your title for the day or whatever, is Being a People of Prayer.

And I don't know how you can be a church. I don't know how you can be a Christian without having some hunger for developing your relationship with God.

[ 1 : 02 ] I don't know that you, as a Christian or as a church, cannot be a people of prayer. Can you? I mean, I don't know if that's possible. It's just such a central part of everything that we are.

So good theme, good value if it's one of your values. I think it's interesting that this is a value of yours because we have six core values at Corroboros. We have kind of a, as many churches have done in recent days, tried to think through maybe more of our unique place in the city or our unique place in the body or what is our unique calling because of the kind of people that are a part of our believing community or whatever.

We've come up with mission and vision statements and values. And we have six core values at Corroboros. And one of them is being committed to developing a people of prayer.

Isn't that interesting? As I've looked through loads of different websites over the years, thankfully, thankfully, some kind of commitment to developing our prayer lives is usually there somewhere in a church's DNA.

And that's good because it just, it has to be. And yet it's interesting as well that even though we all know this is important, we also know, I think, that you can't force people into prayer, can you?

[ 2 : 22 ] You can't. I know as a pastor, I don't know if Graham feels this way as well, I know I'm prone, even though I don't like it, I can be prone to guilt tripping people into things.

You know what I mean by that? You know, and you just, you know, there's only five people at the prayer meeting this week and we die without prayer. So, you know, where are you? And trying to get people to be motivated by, I don't know, raising my voice or stomping my feet or whatever. You can't do that. You can't. Prayer is not something you can guilt trip people into. Prayer isn't even something that you can force people into.

I'm not even quite sure prayer is necessarily something you can teach people into. Does that sound strange? I'm not. When you think about it, I'm not even quite.

I mean, we need to know what the Bible says about it, but I'm not quite sure that's the way in. I think rather prayer is primarily a function of a developing relationship with Christ.

[ 3 : 30 ] Think about that. I think it's a function. It's not like a thing, you know, that you have to do is, you know, tick that box as a Christian.

I think it's more a function of our relationship with Christ. And I see it both as an inworking. It's an inworking of our relationship with Christ in the sense that the more we pray, the deeper our relationship will become.

Is that fair? The more we pray, the more time we spend with God, the more we talk to him and listen to him, which is what I think prayer is, the deeper our relationship.

So it's an inworking of our relationship with Christ. But I also think it's an outworking. Think about it. Think about it. Think about it. It's an outworking of our relationship with Christ as well in the sense

that the deeper our relationship gets, the more we'll pray.

Does that make sense? You know, and just think about relationships. Just think about what it is to have relationships or the lack of relationships. And why would you why would a relationship not grow?

[ 4 : 43 ] What things are involved in making a relationship strong? And so I think prayer is essentially an inworking and an outworking of a relationship with Christ.

And I guess one of the verses that really captures this for me, even though it's not necessarily a prayer verse per se, is John 15 verse five. Which says, I am the vine.

You are the branches. This is Jesus speaking. He who abides in me and I in him. He bears much fruit.

For apart from me, you can do nothing. And I'd like to suggest to you that that maybe more than anything helps us understand how utterly dependent we are on God.

How utterly dependent we are on him. Your theme for today is, and I think it's your value that you have, is walking with God in prayer more dependently.

[ 5 : 53 ] Isn't that interesting? You recognize this or whoever wrote the statement recognizes this. That a huge part, and I'm not quite sure that we understand this as believers as much as we need to.

A huge part of what prayer is has to do with our dependence on God. I guess for years, I don't know how you view prayer.

I don't know how you do prayer. Usually corporately, we do prayer fairly similarly. We get into groups or we sit in a big circle or we pray as a congregation.

But, and this is sometimes hard, but it would be amazing if at some point today, you could share with somebody else what your personal prayer life is like.

Now that's very personal, isn't it? Ooh, and I don't even know if Scottish people do that. Personal. Ooh, you know, deep and meaningful. Do you do deep and meaningful?

[ 6 : 54 ] I don't know. But it would be really, really amazing if you could go there, even a little bit go there. What is it? What are the dynamics of your prayer life like?

Where do you go? What do you do? What do you say? What do you think? Do you ever talk about that with anybody? I rarely talk with people about the intimate dynamics of my prayer life.

And yet I think we're missing a huge opportunity as believers to share something that could be encouraging. It could be motivating. For years, I viewed my prayer mainly as just my, it was my connection with God.

That's kind of how I, it was my, that's where I connected with God. I would, I'd go someplace and I'd connect with God, Him and me. Or I may have viewed it, and many do, as my access to His power source.

You know what I mean? The, the, the, what's, what's the, the, the, the, the, the quote that prayer is the, the slender nerve that moves the muscle of omnipotence.

[ 8 : 00 ] Remember that? Isn't that big? Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscle of omnipotence. That's a, that's a good one. And I'm, listen, I'm sure that's true.

But far more than that, I have come to believe, maybe I'm right, maybe I'm wrong. But I think scripture backs me up on this. Far more than that, I've come to believe that maybe more than anything, prayer is an expression of how much I know I can't do anything without Christ.

Let that settle on you for just a minute. Maybe more than anything. I'm making this suggestion, you can come back on me today on this one if you want. That maybe more than anything, prayer is my expression of how much I know, John 15, 5, how much I know.

Not just it's a nice verse and yeah, you kind of pay it lip service, but how much I know. I can't do anything without God.

And I think this is proven out in our lives, don't you? I think this is proven out. I think we can test this theory out in our own lives.

[ 9 : 21 ] Because why is it when, for me anyway, maybe not for you, but I'll be personal. Because I don't know, you guys haven't shared your personal prayer lives with me.

Maybe we'll talk about that a little bit in our break or whatever together. But for me, why is it when things are going just swimmingly in my life? Thank you. It doesn't always work that way, but there are seasons where things are going swimmingly in my life.

Why is it that during those seasons, I really struggle to pray? Is that fair? One of the places that I struggle to pray more than anywhere else is on holiday.

I got all these grand ideas for the books I'm going to read and the time that I'm going to spend with God. And my mother lives in Florida. So we go there. I didn't get this tanned in Edinburgh.

Alright? So we go there. And I've got all these grand plans. And I'm relaxing. And I have all the time that I need. I'm not going to work. I don't have any messages to prepare.

[10:26] I'm not visiting anybody. I've got all this time. And I'm just thinking, this is going to be amazing. And I've got these ideas for how I'm going to pray. And I struggle more on holiday to find time or spend time with God than anywhere.

Why is that? Why is that? I don't know if you've found that. And yet, when the absolute bottom falls out of my world. And that happens occasionally as well.

When the absolute bottom falls out of my world. Man, you can't get me off my knees. You can't get me off my knees. What's that all about? What is that saying? I think it's saying that our prayer lives are probably one of the greatest barometers anywhere of our level of real dependence on God.

So if I'm not praying, then who am I depending on? I'm depending on me. Let me share a little bit more about this in my seminar.

And I've shared this with you guys, I'm sure, before on and off through the years. But about 15 years ago, I had a nervous breakdown. Never even knew what one was. Never particularly wanted to have one.

[11:29] But I had a nervous breakdown. I was out of the ministry for almost a year. Never thought that I would ever go back. I couldn't even take a visitor in my house.

When one of the elders came to visit me, I ran upstairs to my room, literally, to hide. Never thought I'd ever go back to ministry again. And people asked me, I remember at the time and over the years as I've shared that, do I know why I had a nervous breakdown?

It's a good question, isn't it? Don't ask somebody who's having a nervous breakdown why they're having a nervous breakdown or they'll just have a worse nervous breakdown. Okay? But people have asked, you know, because I think people have had nervous breakdowns or anxiety or panic or depression or whatever.

Why? Why may that have been the case for me? And I think there are probably loads of reasons as I look back and reflect on it. But one reason that I'm almost certain is true. Is that over the years, I believe that I had drifted into a pretty extreme life of self-dependence and self-reliance as a pastor. During the time that I had off work, which was a long time, I had a lot of time to think. And as I reflected back on my relationship with Christ, I had a lot of time to pray as well, particularly in the acute periods of my anxiety, all I did was pray.

[12:53] And, you know, I just thought I hadn't been praying for my sermons. I can think about numerous times walking up to a pulpit and just thinking, I haven't even prayed over this message. Why? Well, I've done it hundreds of times.

I could do it. I've done it hundreds of times. You know, what do I need God for? I can do it. See what I mean? You start doing life that way. And yeah, I don't know if you're on a road to a nervous breakdown, but you're not in a good place.

So I hadn't been praying for my ministry. I hadn't been praying for my family. I hadn't been praying for my own relationship with Christ. And it came to a head for me in Romania when I'd been invited over to speak at the Bible school there on guess what subject?

Prayer. They'd asked me to go over in prayer. And I spoke on prayer for a week, spoke on the Lord's Prayer. And all these young people were coming up, and they were like, oh, you know, I'd never thought of these things.

This is changing my prayer life, they were telling me. This is changing my prayer life. And I'm thinking deep inside my own heart, my prayer life's a mess. My prayer life's a mess.

[13:59] I don't know that it had been so weak. And I had been in the ministry for 12 years by that point in time. Say, how do you do that? Well, I'm sure you've got a parallel somewhere in your life.

You don't have to be a pastor to struggle with prayer. Okay, my text for this morning is Mark 9. So turn to Mark 9. Okay, we've got a few minutes, but text here, Mark 9.

I'm going to pick it up in verse 14. Okay, so Mark 9, you there? Mark 9, verse 14. This is coming on the back of Peter and James and John, just having been up the mountain with Jesus.

Remember? When he has been transfigured into something. Not quite sure anybody really can unpack this perfectly, but he's transfigured into...

We know that something of his glory was veiled. We often talk about that when we look at Philippians 2, and the kenosis of Christ, or the emptying of Christ, and something of his glory is veiled as he comes into the world.

[15:03] But here in Mark 9, and on this mountain experience that Peter and James and John have the privilege of being a part of, Jesus is transfigured into something, not what it was, of a manifestation of that outward glory.

So it has to be, right? Because he's literally shining. He is literally glowing. His garments, it says, becomes brighter than anything on earth.

So there's something going on here of a manifestation of the greatness of God, and the greatness of who Jesus is, as God in human flesh.

And it's so staggering, it literally knocks these guys off their feet as God speaks from heaven. And they're literally floored. They're literally floored. I don't know if you've ever been floored by God, but they are literally floored by God.

Once in my life I remember being floored by God. When my parents finally got saved after years of praying for them, and literally falling on my face before the Lord. I said, well, Lord, that's it.

[16:04] I said, take me now. You know, I felt as though I'd seen everything I needed. These guys were floored by God. And then Mark picks it up in verse 14. So that's the context.

Mark then picks it up in verse 14. He says, when they came back to the disciples, so they came down off the mountain and back, the disciples were there, and they were gathered. There was a large crowd had gathered around them, and there were some scribes there that were arguing with them.

And it says, immediately when the entire crowd saw Jesus, so Peter, James, John, Jesus, all coming down from the mountain, they saw Jesus, they were amazed, and began running up to greet Him. He had performed many miracles by this time.

He was becoming more and more well-known. And Jesus asked them, what are you discussing with them? What are you discussing together with the scribes and the Pharisees? And one of the crowd answered to the disciples.

One of the crowd answered Him, Teacher, I brought you my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and stiffens out.

[17:06] And I told your disciples to cast it out. So he had brought this boy to the disciples, apparently, while Jesus and the others were on the mountain.

Brought your disciples to cast it out, and they couldn't do it. And he answered and said to them, O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you?

How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me. And they brought the boy to him. When he saw him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, falling to the ground.

He began rolling around and foaming at the mouth. And he asked his father, how long has this been happening to him? And he said, from childhood. Imagine this guy's life. Imagine his anxieties, his fears, his burden.

It's often thrown him both into the fire, and into the water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us, and help us.

[18:13] And Jesus said to him, if you can, all things are possible to him who believes.

Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, I do believe. Help my unbelief. Boy, is that an honest statement, if you've ever heard one, of the complexity of the life of faith.

Isn't it? That is the life of faith, folks. That is the life of, certainly my life of, I do believe. Help my unbelief. Incredible, simple, compact little statement, of the complexity, and the reality of a life of faith, just tucked in this little story.

But we're not going to talk about that this morning. But anyway, when Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, you deaf and mute spirit, I command you come out of him, and do not enter him again.

After crying out, and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out. And the boy became so much like a corpse, that most of them said, he's dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and raised him up, and he got up.

[ 19 : 21 ] When he came into the house, his disciples began questioning him privately, why could we not drive it out? And I don't think he wanted to say, because you're a bunch of numpties, but, you know, maybe that was, and his mind would have been on mine.

But instead he says to them, this kind cannot come out, by anything but prayer. Isn't that interesting?

Isn't that interesting? Because, Mark 9, comes after Mark 6, which is where Jesus in Mark 6, has already, sent these same guys out, with power over, all unclean spirits.

So that's where we are. Jesus had sent them out, with power over unclean spirits, which is what, is going on here. But now here's an unclean spirit, and they can't do it. Why not?

Why, can't they do it this time? What has happened? Well, Jesus tells them what's happened, doesn't he? In fact, they ask him, outright, in verse 28.

[ 20 : 35 ] Lord, why could we not, drive it out? And he said to them, this kind only comes out, by prayer. Isn't that interesting? Why prayer? Well, I'm going somewhere, with this by the way.

Okay? Why prayer? Why not praise? Why not, this kind only comes out, by me? Or this kind only comes out, by exorcism? Or this kind only comes out, by command, or backflips, or nosedives, or I don't know, whatever.

Why, why, why prayer? Let me tell you why, I think prayer. Because I think prayer, more than anything, is the greatest indication, that we really know, that we can't do anything, without Jesus.

And I think these guys, doesn't say this here, I'm reading between the lines, but I think these guys, had stopped praying. I think they had, stopped relying, on Jesus, to do the work, of the ministry, to live, the life of the Christian, to obey, the words, and commands of God.

I think they had stopped, depending on Jesus, to do that. And they got to a place, where they thought, they could do it themselves. And I think a lot of Christians, and I think a lot of churches, if we're not careful, wind up in exactly, the same place.

[ 22 : 05 ] Exactly, the same place. And I'll tell you something, it scares the life out of me, because, I remember being woken up, to the drift, that had taken place, in my own life, 15 years ago.

Scares the wits out of me. I'm tempted, to share a little bit more, about that experience, but I'll talk to you about it, in the seminar, a little bit more.

This is the utter danger, of self-sufficiency. And I just want to finish off, with the last couple of minutes, I've got here. This is the utter danger, of self-sufficiency. And I just want to finish off, I want to give you four things, that I think self-sufficiency, leaves us with, according to this text.

And why prayer, is such a significant, way to battle, or to counter, the inevitable, inevitable, am I right, or am I wrong with this?

Tell me if I'm wrong. The inevitable, drift, that we are prone to, as frail, and broken, and sinful human beings, the inevitable drift, that we're prone to, when it comes, to this whole issue, of prayer.

[ 23 : 17 ] And our dependence, on self, rather than our dependence, on God. So four things, I think self-sufficiency, leaves us with, according to this text. Number one, I think self-sufficiency, when we drift into that, it leaves us with, obviously, self-ability.

Think about it, self-sufficiency, leaves us with, self-ability. In other words, we can only do, when we become self-sufficient, we can only do, what's humanly, possible.

Is that fair? Because we're not, depending on Christ. Apart from me, you can do, nothing. And that's exactly, what happens. I mean, we can go to work, we can drive our car, we can, but, I don't know, that we can live, the Christ life.

Ourselves, does anybody, think they can? You know, of course we don't. We know we can't, but this is the inevitable, proneness to drift, into self-sufficiency.

And I think we all, I think we all experience that. I think we all experience that. We can only do, what's humanly possible.

[ 24 : 29 ] And in the spiritual realm, that's not much, is it? What's humanly possible, is not much in the spiritual realm. In fact, it's nil. It's nil.

So you wonder why, I don't know, your relationships are crumbling, or you wonder why, nobody in your sphere, is getting saved, or you wonder why, your patience is low, or you wonder, why, your marriage is frail, or you wonder, why, your service at church, is a burden.

Rather than a blessing. I don't know if I'm, if I'm hitting any targets, but, you know, I have felt, all of those things.

I have been through, all of those things, and more. And then, and I have probably wondered why. But boy, I'll tell you, when, when, when, when God needs to push your buttons, he knows what buttons to push.

And again, I'll share in the seminar, I certainly don't have it all together. I certainly don't have it all together. But I think I'm learning. Slowly, 57 years on, you know, I think I'm learning.

[ 25 : 52 ] Not 57 years a Christian. Don't think I'm that old. Alright? I think I'm learning. But I, no way have it together. So number one, self-sufficiency leaves with self-ability. Number two, self-sufficiency, because all these guys had, was their self-ability.

So, self-sufficiency number two, leaves us with self-philosophy. Now watch this. Self-sufficiency, when we get self-sufficient, we, we, nine times out of ten, we, we, we, when we're self-sufficient, we're also self-convinced.

Aren't we? I've got what it takes. I can do it. I can do it. I can do it. I got that way. I got that way. I got that way. Every Sunday morning now, I take my message, and I hold it out before God.

Every Sunday morning, I hold it out before God, and I say, Lord, this is just a manuscript, that I've tried to put together, here, in my humanness, my brokenness, hopefully some of my dependence, and I say, this is only a manuscript.

Lord, you have to make it a message. You've got to make it a message. And if you don't make it a message, then everybody's going to go home, starving spiritually.

[ 27 : 05 ] Starving spiritually. But for years, for years, I just waltzed up to the pulpit. I did. And it wasn't until I had this breakdown, I looked back, and for a number of years before that, I thought, I've preached hundreds of messages.

I'm not saying any of them have been good, but I've preached them. Hundreds of messages. And I just started to live that way. I think I got like these guys did in Mark 9.

I got to the point where I've done this before. Now, to begin with, the first time you're up front of people, and you know, you're praying like mad. Why? Because you have a need. You're not on holiday.

You're not sitting in a lounge chair in Florida. You have a need. And you pray. Because it's hard. There's pressure on you. That's a good thing, folks. That's a good thing.

I met with a guy this week who's really struggling with different things. And with all the pastoral compassion I could muster, I tried to tell him, you know what? That's not as bad as you think. That's not as bad as you think.

[ 28 : 07 ] Yeah, it's heavy. Yeah, it's hard. But there are going to be things going on in the depths of your heart right now that you would never believe. Because you're learning to depend on God. You're learning to depend on God.

When I'm sitting there and the sun is shining and everything, the world is right, I'm not learning to depend on God because I'm not. I'm laying in the sunshine. I'm not. So you start to become self-convinced and probably self-deceived.

In Luke's account of this same incident, in Luke's account, this is Mark's account, but in Luke's, Matthew and Luke, the synoptics all have this incident from different perspectives and they all add different bits.

It's good to look at this maybe later on or tonight or whatever, go back and look at Matthew, Mark, and Luke's. It's a big full picture. But in Luke's account of this same incident, Jesus says to the disciples when he's talking to them about their need to depend on him and the fact that they're unbelieving and this only comes out by prayer, Luke says, let these words sink into your heads. That's where he says they're numpties basically, thick heads. Let these words sink into your heads because I think you've become self-convinced and self-deceived. Thinking you can do the work of God on your own.

[ 29 : 22 ] Man. Number three, self-sufficiency leaves us with self-eminency. Doesn't it? Think about it. Self-sufficiency. Self. I can do it.

Leaves us with self-eminency. The more we depend on self, the more we believe in self and the more we believe in self, the more we exalt self. And this is an easy thing to do, folks.

You may not think it's happening, but I don't know that there's a human being alive that isn't tempted into this. Reading between the lines, I wonder, even though Peter, James, and John weren't a part of the crowd that tried to toss the demon out of the boy, reading between the lines, I wonder whether some of the material's not been organized here with Mark.

I'm putting this, and I'm sure the incident, this was chronological, but it's interesting that this situation with the boy happens right after this situation where Peter, James, and John are on the mountain with Jesus.

And not only do they see this, whatever this manifestation of his glory is, but who else do they see up there? Moses and Elijah. And it doesn't say this, I tend to do a little bit of reading between the lines when I'm studying the Bible, but it's just asking questions.

[ 30 : 40 ] It's all I'm doing is asking questions. You know, what could be going on here? What's going on in these guys' minds? You've got to ask yourself, especially in narrative, you've got to ask yourself those questions. It's good because it makes it live.

These are real people. How do you think, potentially, how do you think Peter, James, and John were feeling as they came down the mountain to the other guys who hadn't been with Jesus and seen this manifestation of his glory?

I don't know. I'm reading between the lines. It doesn't say this, but I wonder if there wasn't something these guys might have been slipping into themselves. I wonder if they might have, when's the last time you saw Moses and Elijah? You know?

We did. We saw them. You know, I don't know. But it's just kind of funny. These guys, we know Peter puts his foot in it. We know these guys don't get it right. We know they're prone to the same kind of self-life that we are.

So, I'm not quite sure about that. But, anyway, last one here. Self-sufficiency leaves us with self-ability, self-philosophy, self-eminency. Self-sufficiency ultimately leaves us with self-exclusively.

[ 31 : 49 ] That's it. That's it. In other words, you want to try to live the Christ life without Christ? Go ahead. Go ahead. Go ahead.

I wonder if, folks, I wonder if what God is saying to our broken world in the mess that it is today. Read Romans 1. Romans 1 is all about this.

In the mess that it is. If that's the way you want to live, if you want to reject me and everything that I stand for, and every purpose that you were made to have in your creation, if you want to live that way, go ahead.

Go ahead. Go ahead. And I'll show you what a world like that looks like. And I think that happens in our lives as well. You want to live? You want to live with no prayer life?

You want to live without that dependence on God? Go ahead. You'll be left with you. You'll be left with you. And I think we all know in the deepest depths of our hearts, when we understand the reality of who we are in our own brokenness, that's not a pretty picture.

[ 33 : 02 ] It's not a pretty picture. When we stop depending on God, eventually, we begin to believe that not only are we all we need, but actually, we're all there is. Don't we?

We're all there is. Mark doesn't record this, but if you read on in Luke's account again of this incident, the disciples actually start to rebuke others after this, right after this, they start to rebuke others who are driving out demons in Jesus' name.

So think about that. So they're looking at, I don't know, they're looking at another church with a program that's working and they're, you know how sometimes we get? And we start taking shots at our own people.

So they're looking at another church or they're looking at another Christian who's leading loads of people to Christ. And maybe, and this is strange, don't look at me this way, you probably know this, but there's something in me and I hate it, I hate it, but there's something in me that can actually start to envy and even begin to think ill of other Christians who seem to be more productive than I am. And I almost wish them unwell. Isn't that awful? You ever think a believer could be like that? Maybe I don't even belong in front of you or in the ministry or anything like that.

[ 34 : 24 ] But something ugly in my flesh can get there. And I think that's what is happening here. They are so self-dependent, so self-reliant, that there are people who are actually casting out demons.

They're on the same team! And they're casting out demons. And in Luke 9, 49, John says, Master, can you believe this?

We actually saw someone else driving out demons in your name, but we tried to stop him because he's not one of us. Can you believe that?

Somebody other than me wanting to do something in Jesus' names. Well, my time's up. Walking with God in prayer more dependently. And I think that's what prayer is all about in the first place.

That's what prayer is all about in the first place. In other words, I don't think we can walk with God dependently outside of prayer. Think about that. I don't think we can walk dependently on God outside of prayer.

[ 35 : 25 ] And I know that my prayer life is the absolute greatest indication of how dependent I am on God. I know it is. I know when I am really depending on God, I'm on my knees.

And when I'm not, I'm just doing my own thing. I don't know if that's what you were expecting this morning, but that's what you got. Okay? It is about dependence. It is about dependence.

Your statement says it's about dependence. And I think you're right. I think you're right. I think you've got that right. Let me pray. And then, I think we just got a break coming up here.

Father, we, here we are. Here we are in our humanness. Here we are in our brokenness. Here we are today with this opportunity that you've provided for us to be together and to think and to hear and to listen and to ponder and to readjust our lives.

What a great opportunity today for us to have a mid-course correction in our spiritual lives. And so, Lord, in dependence on you, we close our eyes, we bow our heads, and we do this thing called prayer.

[ 36 : 38 ] We speak to you because of the precious blood of Jesus that's opened the way for us to have this relationship with you. we express our dependence on you.

We confess our proneness to self-sufficiency rather than God-dependency, and we pray and ask you that in this special time we have together today, you would help us to become more reliant and dependent on you so that we might live in this world in a way that glorifies you.

In Jesus' name, Amen.