If we spent as much time in the church and in our lives praying as we do talking about prayer we would see greater results in our individual lives, in our churches and in our world. Today I would like for us to think about the power and the importance of prayer. Most people I know pray. Some pray at meal time, some people fervently pray for others, some pray for our country. Some people pray in times of illness or death while some people look at prayer almost like a good luck charm, asking God to bless what they are doing rather than seeking God’s will so you can follow it.

The Bible speaks a lot about prayer. Prayer is conversation with God and is seen in the Old Testament where God’s faithful servants like Abraham, Moses, Joshua and David talked with God regularly. Our scripture passage today focuses on prayer, and Jesus gives us what we call the Lord’s Prayer or the model prayer. The Lord’s Prayer is a way to pray. It is not a prayer telling us to pray that particular prayer, using the same words and letting that be enough in our prayer life. This prayer gives us some guidelines, some suggestions of how we ought to pray. Prayer needs to come from the heart and reflect our deepest thoughts and desires.

Sometimes we do not pray because we do not know how it works. The story is told of an old farmer who, some years ago, went into a hardware store and asked for a new saw. The salesman sold him a chain saw, guaranteeing it was the latest model and that it would cut 10 cords of firewood a day.

The next day the farmer returned it and said, "I worked my fingers to the bone, but this thing cut hardly any wood."

The puzzled salesman said, "Let's try it on some wood I have in the back." They went in the back, the salesman pulled the cord, and the motor "Vrooooomed" to life. When it did, the old farmer jumped back and said, "What's that noise?"
All the power we need may be available to us, but it will do us no good if we don't know it's there. As believers, the Holy Spirit lives in us. He has all the power we need to live a victorious Christian life.

Have you thought lately about Jesus and the relationship He has with His disciples? I often wonder what they talked about or what they did when they relaxed. Of all the people who lived and especially those who lived in the Biblical days, the disciples had a unique opportunity to know Jesus, fellowship with Him and grasp His mindset, goals and dreams. They had many opportunities to talk about many things and scripture records that the only thing they ever asked Jesus to do was to teach them to pray.

If Jesus were here today and you had an opportunity to talk with Him, visit with Him and ask Him anything, what would you ask Him? Some people today would want to know things about the future. What is the stock market going to do? Who is going to win the NCAA tournament? How can I make wise decisions? Why don’t we have world peace? Why do people not follow what God lays out as His way to live? Why do people sin? Why do we have so much crime in our world? Why do innocent people suffer?

The disciples had that chance to talk and ask questions and they asked Jesus just one thing: Lord, teach us to pray.

Some people today look at prayer as a good luck charm. Some people pray only when the going gets rough. Some people do not realize what talking with God is all about anyway.

Recently I was visiting at Chippenham Hospital and I parked on the top level of the parking deck. I was visiting one of our members and as I returned to my car a man was on the elevator with me and he looked down and sad. He spoke and said he had been with his wife who had just had surgery and she was very sick. I said to this total stranger, “I will be praying for her.” He paused and said “What do you mean? How do you pray?” By now the elevator was at the top level of the parking deck and we both got off to head to our cars. He said “Do you mean that you could pray for my wife?” I said, “Of course, just watch me!” Right there in that parking deck I prayed, out loud for his wife, and when I finished he said “no one has ever prayed for me or my wife before. I do not know how to pray.”
I am afraid there are many people in that boat today. People do not pray because they do not know how to pray. I am convinced that if people understood the power of prayer and what it can accomplish, there would be much more praying taking place in this world.

If we can ask the same question the disciples asked maybe we could deepen our prayer life. Most people I know pray in some way. It may be for our food when eat. It may be at church when someone leads us in prayer. I have often said there are different kinds of prayer and different people with whom to pray. You can pray at church, with your family, with your spouse, but for me personally, the best praying is when it is just God and me alone talking and listening often with the Bible open and with a prayer list handy and a notebook so I can write down some prayer requests. The best praying is when you close all distractions out. You cannot pray effectively and watch a baseball game at the same time or listen to the radio and pray at the same time.

Let’s look at the model prayer Jesus gave us and see if we can learn anything that might help our prayer life. Remember this is a model prayer, it is the Lord’s Prayer that we can make our own if we understand what we are praying for.

Jesus starts by saying,

“**Our Father, which art in heaven**”. He could have said “My Father”; but in saying “Our Father”, He was pointing out the relationship you and I have with each other. If I say this is my car that means I have the keys, I can go anywhere I want to go and I own it. If I say this is our car it means that we have joint ownership of it, probably both have a set of keys and it changes the relationship you and I have. We probably have to check with one another on the use of the car. In saying “Our Father”, Jesus is showing the brother/sister relationship we share. He is as much your Father as my Father.

“**Hallowed be Thy Name.**” Hallowed means whole, holy and complete. If His name is hallowed it means that nothing needs to be added to it. God is holy, and we cannot add anything to what is already full and complete.

“**Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**” Here we are praying that God’s Kingdom will come to pass here on earth as His perfect will
is being done in heaven. I believe the key to successful praying is praying and believing when we pray that “Thy will be done”. These four little words are the secret to praying. The best illustration of this is seen in the life of Jesus when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane—“Father, it would be nice if I did not have to go through all this; nevertheless, not my will but Thy will be done.” Jesus practiced what He taught.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Jesus was concerned about the here and now. Of course He was concerned about all eternity, but He also cared about our physical needs and what we eat. It is interesting that He prayed for the needs of today, knowing that tomorrow would take care of itself. God always provides. He provided for the needs of the children of Israel while they were wandering in the wilderness for forty years. Jesus said, “I am the Bread of life.” Bread is essential for our growth and is far more than the flour used to make bread. Bread is the food we need for our bodies and there is spiritual food we need for our souls.

“Forgive us our debts (or trespasses) as we forgive others.” Forgiveness is an important aspect of prayer. We are sinners and we need God’s forgiveness daily. We ought also to show how to forgive others. “I am sorry” may be the hardest words for any person to say. You cannot get right with God and not be forgiven, and you cannot get right with your spouse, your neighbor and your boss and not understand the importance of forgiveness in your life. Jesus talked a lot about this when He said to people “Your sins are forgiven.” In Mark 2 we see where four men brought their friend to Jesus. The man was a paralytic and the place was so crowded that the men had to go up on the roof and dig a hole in it so they could let the man down at the feet of Jesus. Jesus knew the real needs of a person – forgiveness, not just healing.

“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” There is temptation in this world. The devil is alive and healthy and he would lead us astray in a heartbeat. The devil would do anything to drive a wedge between us and God. He plants seeds of discouragement and doubt in our lives. He wants us to think bad thoughts, live poor examples before others and to think that God is not who He says He is. Temptation is real in our world today. Sin abounds everywhere and young people and adults are tempted in subtle ways, and we are not always aware of all the forces of evil around us.
“For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever.” In reality the whole world belongs to God. It is His world and He created it. He also has all power at His command and He needs and deserves all the glory due Him. His kingdom shall never end; it shall last forever.

Jesus taught His disciples much when He gave us this prayer. Each word and each phrase is packed with meaning, and I challenge you this week to focus each day on this special prayer Jesus gave us so that we can be better able to pray.

There are some truths we need to remember:

1. Prayer is the most untapped resource we have as Christians and as a church.
2. God wants conversation with us.
3. We can tell God anything because He already knows it anyway.
4. We must develop the art of listening in prayer as well as speaking to God.
5. Time spent in prayer may be our greatest investment.

Bon Air is a praying church. I do not mean to imply we are not pray-ers. However, if you are a prayer warrior you know the importance of prayer and you know we need to spend more time in prayer.

1. We need to pray more.
2. We need to learn to pray specifically.
3. We need to pray confessionally.
4. We need to pray expectantly.
5. We need to pray with thanksgiving.
6. We must be serious about praying.
7. We need to pray for the lost.

Prayer is so important that we need to intentionally strive to be stronger prayer warriors. One man challenged another to an all-day wood chopping contest. The challenger plunged right in chopping away, piling up his wood while taking no breaks all day long. The other man also went to chopping, but he stopped and took a number of breaks along the way.
At the end of the day everyone was surprised to find the second man's woodpile higher! The first man said, "How can this be? You took all those breaks and yet you have more wood!" The second man said, "But you don't understand, when I sat down to rest, I was sharpening my axe."

Prayer helps us to sharpen our spiritual axe and be more effective as we pray and as we serve God. Sometimes the smartest thing is not more work, but a well-planned rest.

At this particular time in the life of our church we need prayer as never before. We need to pray for one another. We need to pray for our staff. We need to pray for our Transition Team and our Pastor Search Team that they may be led by God’s Spirit to the person God has selected to serve as our pastor. If we pray that God’s will would be done, we will be fine. If we fail to pray or if we pray selfishly, we are in trouble.

I pledge to each of you that I will pray for you. We need each other. We are God’s lighthouse here in Bon Air with influence reaching around the world. As we saw last week, God has blessed us and His blessing will continue if we are faithful to His call and leadership.

We must always remember why we are here. We are here to love God, worship Him and to share the Good News we have with others. There may be people here today who do not know Jesus. I would love to talk with you one-on-one and try to answer your questions about what it means to be a Christian.

*The world says wait. Jesus says now!*

*The world say God is not important in your life; you can be your own god. God says to enjoy eternal life you must be born again.*

*The world says you have too much sin in your life. God says your sin can be forgiven.*

When Herbert Jackson was assigned to the mission field, he was given a car that wouldn't start without a push. So he would round up kids from the school to give his car a push when he needed to go somewhere; or if he was out making his
rounds, he'd either park on a hill or just leave the car running. He went through this trouble for two years.

When he was heading home on furlough he was showing the new missionary what had to be done to get the car going. The new guy took a look under the hood and said, "Uh, Dr. Jackson, I believe the only trouble is this loose cable." He gave the cable a twist, slid behind the wheel, and the engine roared to life.

Dr Jackson later explained to a seminary class that for two years he'd pushed that car around, and all he needed to do was connect the cable.

As Christians, we also often live in our own power, struggling and pushing to get by. But the resurrection power of Jesus is available to us all along the way—if we'll just "connect" to Him by prayer and faith!

**May God bless all of us as we commit and recommit ourselves to Him and His Lordship over our lives?**