



# SERMON RECAP FROM AUGUST 17, 2025

## PSALM 13, ROMANS 8:18-28

### Prayer: Presence over Performance

Series: Finding Faith for the Skeptic

Preacher: Robb McCoy

I have found that my prayer life is not so much about changing God's mind as it is about molding my will. There is much scientific evidence that supports the idea that prayer and meditation can help improve a person's health. Praying to and focusing on a good and loving God activates centers in your brain that control empathy, higher thought, and can lower fears and anxieties.

Paul writes, the Spirit answers with "sighs too deep for words." Prayer is seldom about receiving direct messages from God. It is about connecting to the Divine, acknowledging something bigger than self, and allowing for new connections to be made.

Prayers great and small are always answered - not in the cause and effect, transactional way that many imagine - but they are answered through gradual change, acceptance of fate, release of hostility and bitterness. Prayers of lamentation are especially important to release stress.

Psalm 13 takes us from crisis to complaint to plea to praise. It is a perfect expression of lamentation and captures the essence of what prayer can do in our hearts and minds. Prayer can be our guide in healing that is not always a point A to point B straight-line journey. I invite you into prayer. Try one of the prayers that are in the column. Try each one once over the course of the week and see if something connects. The prayers will be answered.

*"These days, my intercessory prayers are an act of surrender - a way to voice my hopes and my hopelessness, my power to act and my powerlessness. When I pray for things I hope for, I am searching for ways I can act to make a situation better. When I pray in situations I find hopeless, I'm searching for that redemptive perspective."*

*-Mike McHargue, Finding God in the Waves*

#### BASIC PRAYER: TALK TO GOD

This is the easiest and most accessible. Simply reflect on the idea that God delights in you. Simply tell God your dreams, struggles, and hopes. There is nothing that is off-limits or too petty. You are not making a wish list, you are simply opening yourself up to an idea that there is something bigger than your own consciousness.

#### CENTERING PRAYER

This spiritual practice can be deceptively difficult at first. Simply sit in silence and focus on your breath. Be attentive to your body, and allow yourself to sink. Be thankful for each breath. As you breathe, thoughts may come. Do not entertain long trains of thought. Acknowledge them, and then return to your breath. One minute can feel like a long time at first, but as you train, you will be able to extend this.

#### BASIC MEDITATION: FOCUS ON COMPASSION

Meditation takes many of the aspects of centering prayer, but adds a focus thought or mantra. Like centering prayer, the goal is to relax, become aware, and then focus on a mantra. Repeat (out loud or in silence) a word like "compassion" or a phrase like "God is love" or "I am beloved." As other thoughts come into your mind, acknowledge them, push them aside and go back to your mantra.

#### PRAY THE SCRIPTURE: LECTIO DIVINA

Choose a piece of Scripture, not a long passage. A couplet from a Psalm, a saying of Jesus, a greeting from Paul, a few lines from a prophet, and read it. Read it slowly. If a word catches your attention, linger there. Repeat it as you might a meditative mantra. Pause after reading. Pray for guidance. Ask for the Holy Spirit to speak. Read it again. Repeat this process. In the times of silence, ask different questions about what the passage means and how it may apply to your life. Finish with a time of silence and ask yourself, "What is God inviting me to do?"

#### PRAYER WALK

Engaging your body can help with prayer. Go for a walk with the intention of thanking God for every step. Notice the wonder around as you walk and pray.

#### LABYRINTH

A labyrinth can be a walk, but it can also be something you find, print on a piece of paper, and trace with your finger. Picture something in the center: a goal, a value, a hoped-for dream. As you move toward it and follow the path reflect on the twists and turns of life's journey. Reach the center, give thanks, embrace the center, then journey back out of the labyrinth.