

# *Becoming ...*

From Adult Education  
First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell

SUMMER 2023 --- ISSUE #4



## **Let's Pray!**

There is a rhythm to the universe we were born into - a rhythm that asks us to pause, become still, and take notice. Then we can return to a part of ourselves which can wonder at the vastness of creation, the truly amazing beauty of it. We can experience the very biblical feeling of awe as we contemplate the magnificence of the ongoing in the universe - like the massive astronomical events the Webb telescope testifies to that have happened and are happening at distances so great we can barely fathom. Consider the rare opportunities to examine the exquisite design of a tiny hummingbird, or the surprising strength of a newborn baby's grip. Our heart and mind unite in calling out to our God, "How wondrous are your ways!" This is worshipful prayer - centering prayer that helps us recall the many names of God: Creator, Sovereign Lord, Almighty God, Everlasting Lord, The Great I Am to name just a few. When in this quiet time we contemplate the incomprehensible bigness or smallness of God's creations, we see his power and beauty on display. Consider further that they are always there for you to know and explore God's identity and yours.

Each one of us has been created as part of this plan to be in relationship with him, his creation, and each other. We can, hopefully, see our lives through a clearer lens because we can see our Source - the one we are all to honor as "Our Father". Hopefully, such experiences remind us he is in control, and help lessen our controlling grip on life. However, when we do not take time to be still, know that he is God and that we are here by his design, we are easily consumed by the chaos of our lives. We might also begin to feel infinitesimally small, insignificant, even despairing.

But this is not a place where God has placed any of us. He intentionally placed you in the midst of his story

## **IN THIS ISSUE**

### **Focus: Let's BECOME people who Pray**

Prayer is participation in a love relationship through conversation with our Father who art in heaven ...

### **Summer Opportunities**

Online study - "When You Pray"

StudyGateway.com - hundreds of studies

### **Book Reviews**

"Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools"

"Don't Hold Back"

### **Give God His Time: Going Digital**

YouVersion Prayer Plan & Video on Honest Prayer

### **Inspiration** Encouragement for "Becoming..."

- a story where God loves us so much that he humbled himself and entered his creation as one who came to serve and to save us. Trying to live without him diverts our attention from his uplifting power. We live smaller lives and build lesser relationships without him.

Christ, the entire Bible, and the natural world all invite a response to God's saving love. Prayer is a way to enter a conversation with him. It is where we can bring it all - the full range of our human needs, gratitude, sorrows, anxieties. Don't hold back. Then listen to the ways he responds. The result is learning his heart and allowing his love to heal and soften our own.

Do we have to know all about prayer to pray? Certainly not. The book on prayer that we recommend even states, "Pray as you can." But testimonies of the once unprayerful and the ever-prayerful tell us that the more often and the more consistently we pray, the better our approach and our listening. We learn that the more we come to know the heart of our Father the more our relationship deepens and our passion for the Lover of our soul grows. So, come before God. Let us still our lives and humbly call on our Father, the one who loved us first and loves us best. Accept his invitation to deep loving relationship. **Let's Pray!**

## SUMMER STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

**FIRST:** Aligning with our current Focus on Prayer, there is this summer offering through Lifeway entitled "When You Pray". You'll join with 6 beloved Bible teachers who will help you study prayers in the Bible that can inspire your own. Over 7 sessions, you'll learn that God welcomes your praise and lament, your thanksgiving and intercession. You'll see examples of how to pray when you're alone and when you're gathered with others. Above all, you'll notice there's no one right way to pray. As you draw near to God through prayer, you'll find your faith strengthened and your heart united to Christ.

<https://www.lifeway.com/whenyoupray> **REGISTER BY JUNE 29<sup>th</sup>!!**

**SECOND:** Adult Education continues to promote individual and independent group studies by offering participation in our First Pres Caldwell subscription to **StudyGateway**, a video library with access to thousands of Bible studies. This is FREE to you as members of First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell. Check it out at <https://watch.studygateway.com/> I am certain that there is a video series here for you, So, accept our invitation to join by clicking [here](#). Email us if you have any problems.

**Samples by Topic** You can listen to a trailer and read the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of many studies for FREE!

STARTING OUT IN FAITH [Crazy Faith](#) A young and gifted pastor and influencer.

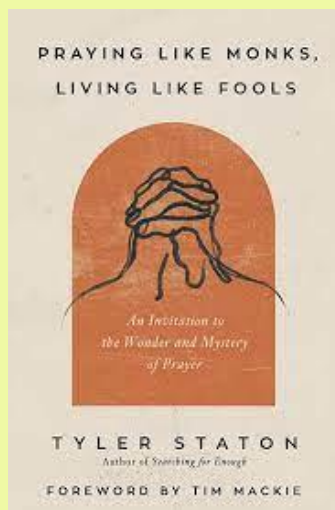
CULTURAL & SOCIAL ISSUES [God and Race](#) One of THE best on the issue of race relations

TEENS, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS [Alter Ego](#) Powerful message for youth... for everybody!

These are just a small assortment among a tremendous volume of choices that may be part of the regeneration of your heart. If the Holy Spirit is tugging at you to examine any of these, we hope and pray that you will take the next step toward becoming drawn into study and hungrier to be like Christ.

**THIRD:** Keep on the lookout towards end of summer for Fall studies. Both Adult Education and the Monday night women's group will be offering different studies which will be publicized in the FPC weekly newsletter. Adult Education also publicizes on the church website and via separate emails. Registration information will also be included.

## Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools: An Invitation to the Wonder and Mystery of Prayer - by Tyler Stanton ([Click here](#))



There are so many reasons I love this book, and I encourage you to check it out on Amazon's [Look Inside](#) and [Listen](#) or [Audible](#). I totally confirm its 5-star rating because of his deep care for all readers to know prayer. Tyler, a young, passionate and even wise pastor and author is writing to "Saints, Sleepwalkers and Skeptics".

I don't know which you are, but this book is for you. Here are his initial words to us.

"I'm writing on prayer because prayer is the dangerous pilgrimage, I'm on. And like a walk on the Camino de Santiago, it's as arduous as advertised and even more worth it than anticipated." (So worth it!) "I'm writing on prayer because I love the church. I believe the Christian church is the hope of the world. I also love the generations who are shrugging off the church not because of spiritual disinterest but because they're taking the sincerity of their spiritual search elsewhere."

"I'm writing on prayer because I trust God to be God. I believe – really believe – that those who seek him will surely find him. I believe that God is loving enough that a conversa-

tion starter is all he needs to draw someone all the way home."

Tyler also takes on the most difficult questions that people have, not at the beginning or ending of many people's dramatic stories. "What I'm interested in is the middle... where the mystery lies ...where all our questions about prayer are littered."

Is it necessary? Is God all powerful? Why does he need me to ask? Why does he sometimes seem to answer only after a long period of asking? What is actually happening when I pray?

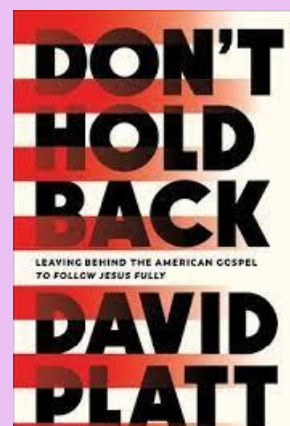
With Tyler's use of stories, Scripture, **and practice**, we can address our questions and pursue a prayer life that consoles and enriches our very real life. **Come. Delve into the mystery of prayer with our God.**

## Don't Hold Back – by David Platt ([Click here](#))

David Platt succeeds in uniting his own incredibly diverse metro D.C. church with Christ's message of love. The Gospel reaches above all the differences among his congregants. He is also another young, passionate minister whose voice inspires other leaders seeking to unite and grow diverse communities. He focuses on sowing the seeds of the gospel in our hearts and seeing God as our prize. He sheds light on how many of the apostle Paul's letters are focused on the very same issues – overcoming differences. Paul's preeminent message is who Jesus Christ is & his healing gift of grace by faith offered to the entire world. He points out how Christians have traded the biblical gospel that exalts Jesus above all for an American gospel that prostitutes Jesus for the sake of comfort, power, politics, and prosperity. He calls Christians to take inevitable risks & find incredible reward as we

- WORK FOR – NOT AGAINST ONE ANOTHER - ESPECIALLY WHEN WE DISAGREE
- TURN THE TIDE ON CENTURIES OF RACIAL DIVISION IN THE CHURCH
- TRUST ALL OF GOD'S WORD WITH CONVICTION, & LOVE EVERYONE WITH COMPASSION
- DO JUSTICE WITH KINDNESS, AND DISCOVER THE GOOD LIFE ACCORDING TO GOD
- PLAY OUR PART IN SPREADING THE GOSPEL TO ALL NATIONS

This is a fairly short and easy read, and it offers a powerful message for our church. We would do well to be cautioned by our past survey and the author to NOT desire a cultural sameness of thought, but to let the love of Christ first and foremost lead us to fulfill God's Great Commission.



# GIVE GOD HIS TIME: GOING DIGITAL

**YouVersion Bible App.** We continue to promote the YouVersion Bible app because it is not only rich with powerful tools for engaging God's word, it's **FREE!** Use either the QR code OR bible.com/app on your cellphone to download – then start exploring.



We suggest the following 6 day study **"When You Pray: A Study on Prayer"**. Six beloved Bible teachers will help you study prayers that can inspire your own. God welcomes your praise and lament, your thanksgiving and intercession. And you'll see there is no one right way to pray. **PLANS → FIND PLANS→**and Search for the title above. From the options select the icon mirroring the one here.

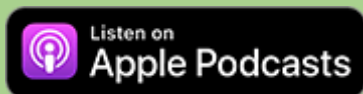


**Podcasts** Perfect for walks, long drives, even drives doing errands throughout the day, podcasts offer different voices that are responsive to the issues of our time and for different lifestyles. This issue suggests a video link that assist us in developing a prayerful life.

You can listen to podcasts on any platform that opens this newsletter, but to provide mobile listening, download any of our recommended podcasts to your cell phone using the links below.

[Confronting Christianity](#) – Tough topics in Christianity - Season Three starts this fall

[Starting Place](#) – A fresh voice. Covers the whole Bible. Started in 2023



Prayer is a conversation between you and God. It is so personal that recommending a podcast to you doesn't honor that. If you are a podcast person and seek ways to pray - find Scripture to pray or get prayers to pray that may help you have a voice for your situations; they are there in abundance. But here is a short video that talks about the **importance of honesty in all our prayers**. For some this is a stumbling block because we forget a lot about God who already knows us better than we know ourselves. Interested? Watch/listen here for good advice. (5:45 mins)

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/video/better-prayer-life/>

# INSPIRATION

This page is a place to celebrate the ways God's Holy Spirit lives and breathes among us, how he inspires us, uplifts us, and encourages us. We would REALLY like to include YOU! If you have a faith walk story, your own or someone else's, that you would like to share, [we would love to post it here](#). It can be anonymous.

## *Becoming ...*

I don't know if anyone noticed that the name of the newsletter has changed to "Becoming...". I recently told a friend that no matter our age this is something we are all doing - becoming. The "..." part begs the question, "Become what?" One simple answer is that we are all becoming older, but that is the natural order of everything and not particular to people. People, through the choices we make, largely decide who we are to become. God calls us to become his image bearers, to reflect his nature in this world. That can be very hard in our self-promoting and noisy world. Distractions come at us all day long, often causing us to forget our God given identity. No one is immune.

Since our Adult Education ministry aims to encourage people to make decisions to encounter Christ, we work to remind, encourage, and inspire all to ask him, seek him, and knock relentlessly on his door every day. Then wait and see how God is responding. He has spoken to us about this, encouraging us to call on him because becoming a better Christian is tough and he knows it. Jesus knows this and his Spirit still walks this life with us. ([Matthew 7:7-11](#))

Becoming a Christian is a daily choice to seek God and become more like Christ. We need to support each other in our growth toward becoming a church that loves God so much that we yearn to "Share God's Light" in this world as much as Jesus did. As the opening of the newsletter states, God's Spirit speaks to us through nature, through the entire Bible, and through answered prayer. We need to also remember that becoming more Christ-like requires staying plugged into the Vine, our nourishment for growing the fruit of the Spirit ([John 15:4,5](#)). This includes prayerful conversation with God.

Even Jesus regularly sought to be alone with his Father to pray. He also gave us the words to The Lord's Prayer ([Matthew 6:9-15](#)). And the Bible is packed with prayers of the faithful, especially in the Psalms. So, our chosen inspiration for entering into a prayerful mindset comes from one of many: Psalm 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God." It is the root of what follows here.

The Psalms are the source of inspiration for much of our traditional and contemporary music. The ability to both make and appreciate music is such a beautiful God-given gift of expression. It unites our hearts and minds. And for some it is a prayerful response to God. Here are three creations on YouTube that can help us to pause, become still, and praise our God.

(I realize that leaving this page feels disruptive to some, but please find an opportunity to listen. I pray you will be pleased with at least one of these.)

[Travis Greene – “Be Still”](#) (with lyrics)

[Stephen Curtis Chapman – “Be Still and Know”](#) (with lyrics)

[Be Still and Know: Christian Meditation and Prayer music](#) (53 minutes of peaceful piano with several Psalm verses)

We hope and pray that some parts of this issue are encouraging you to delve into a more consistent prayer life. We hope to continue encouraging our congregation to pray. Keep a lookout for more opportunities to inspire the desire to BECOME a more prayerful church.

### **WE NEED HELP - PLEASE PRAY FOR THIS MINISTRY**

- Adult Ed is a great place to learn and grow in faith because inspiration of the Holy Spirit is everywhere.
- If you are interested in being a part of the Adult Education Ministry by making contributions to the newsletter, helping with social media, the website, or you just want to learn more, **we would love to have a conversation!**
- If you have feedback or suggestions, [please contact us directly.](#)

Email us at [adult.edu@firstprescaldwell.org](mailto:adult.edu@firstprescaldwell.org)

Jeannine Archibald (chair)