

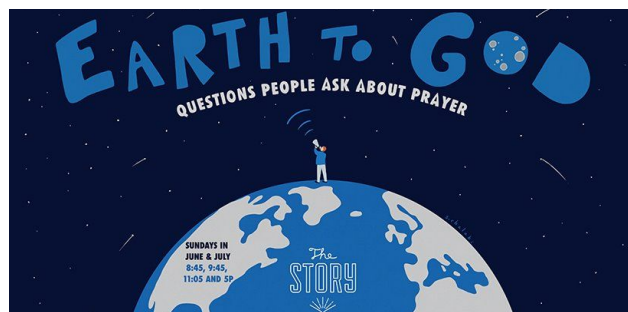
## Sermon Study Guide

The Story Houston - June 23, 2019

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### Intro to 'Earth to God'

Welcome to The Story's sermon series on prayer! First I'll share a programming note: due to the overwhelming response we've received about this series, we've decided to extend "Earth to God" a few more weeks. Instead of a 5-week series, we'll talk about prayer for eight whole weeks through the end of July. So keep those questions coming via email (EarthToGod@thestory.church) or our NEW Facebook Group called "The Story Houston ONLINE" (join this group asap!). So far we've received dozens of your questions about prayer via email, including:

- Is there any proof that prayer really works?
- Is prayer more effective when a bunch of people all pray for the same thing?
- Are there right and wrong ways to pray?
- Is it okay to pray to the saints?
- Why does God seem to answer some prayers and not others?
- If Christians celebrate answered prayers as signs of God's faithfulness, doesn't that mean unanswered prayers are signs of God's unfaithfulness?
- Does God ever change His mind?
- When it comes to prayer, does persistence pay off? Does it matter how many times you pray for the same thing? Can you "wear God down"?
- Is it within reason to pray for a person's physical healing?

The question before us today is:

### **If God already knows everything, what's the point of prayer?**

What were your thoughts about this question before hearing this message? On what authority, knowledge, or experience do you base your understanding?

What are some of the philosophical assumptions behind this question?

Even Jesus himself seems to affirm the validity of today's question:

**Matthew 6:7-8** "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

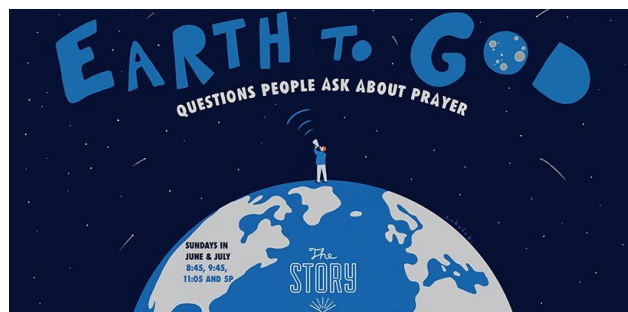
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But does this mean that Christians should never pray for things to change? Apparently not, because in the very next verse, he says:

**Matthew 6:9-13** "This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

So...how can we make sense of Jesus' words? Should we pray expectantly for things to change, or should we only pray for God to change *us*?

**Philippians 4:6-7** Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Despite what the Bible says, many skeptics still struggle with the idea of praying to God if He already knows what He's going to do, whether we pray or not. What is the logical problem with that argument?

What do privilege, comfort, and a sense of entitlement have to do with a question like "If God already knows what He's going to do, what's the point of prayer?"

*Your Notes:*