

We All Want to Change (and We All Are)

Well so good to see you guys this morning. If you have your bibles, turn with me to Matthew 7—we'll get there after while. We missed you last week. If you didn't know, we took the week off last week to allow our volunteers and staff to travel and be with family. But we're back this week, and we're kicking off a new series called *Formation*, which, believe it or not, is *not* a reference to the Beyonce song. Rather, it is a reference to what **Christians throughout the years have called *spiritual formation*. Which is a fancy way to describe the process of how we grow and change as human beings—how we are *formed* to become more like Jesus. So put another way, *formation* is the art and science of how we *change*.**

And that right *there* is something that pretty much all of us are interested in: how we *change*. Especially this time of year. So we are two days away from the New Year. **Every single year, right around this time, a whole lot of people in our culture start thinking about the things they'd like to *change about themselves***, in the form of New Year's resolutions. We start making all these goals for what we're gonna do differently in the new year, for the type of *people* we are going to *become*. Some of us are a little more into all that than others, some of us are more *successful in following through with* than others, but a lot of us start to think about those types of things.

And the reason New Year's resolutions are so popular, whether you personally participate in them or not, is because most of us want to *change* as human beings. We *want* to grow and mature, or at least be somehow different than we currently are. For those of us who are followers of Jesus, that looks like specifically growing and maturing to become more like *Jesus*. **And so all of this raises the question, *how does that happen? How do we, as human beings, actually change?***

Now, to begin answering that question, we need to dip our toes ever-so-slightly into some psychology/philosophy. If you flunked psychology in college like I did, don't worry, I'm going to keep it extremely basic. Okay, **the predominant way of thinking about *formation* for the past three hundred years or so (since the Enlightenment) has been that we change primarily through what we *think*.** That **if we *think* the right things, we will *become* the right kind of people.** You'll see this in the philosophy world with statements like "I *think* and therefore I *am*." That's from the French philosopher Descartes (or, if you flunked philosophy, "Desscartez"). But it has made it all the way down to a popular level. It's even echoed by *everyone's* favorite philosopher *R. Kelly*, who once said "if I can see it, then I can do it. If I just believe it, there's nothing to it. I believe, I can fly." That's from a song called *I Believe I Can Fly*, that he wrote for a movie called *Space Jam*, which is where *everyone* should get their philosophical thinking from. These are both examples of the "thinking" theory of change: that we change primarily through what we *think*. And like I said, this is the way that people have thought about how we change for the last few hundred years. This is why most *education* systems are built around *information transfer*: you sit in a classroom, someone imparts information to you, and you take notes and try your best to retain it.

Now in large part, the *Church* has assumed this method of transformation too. We've concluded that the best way to help people to become more like Jesus is through *information*: sermons, bible studies, Sunday School classes. The Church at large has largely concluded that the best way to help people

change is to give them more *information* about God. That if we can get the right *information* about God, or the bible, *into* people, they will inherently change to become more like Jesus.

So inside and outside the Church, this is the way most people think human beings *change*. Which means this is probably more or less the way we think change happens, whether we realize it or not. If we want to diet, we read a book or a blogpost on dieting. If we want to learn a new trade, we go out and find a podcast or a series of YouTube videos about it. Most of us instinctively believe that **if we can just get the right *thinking* into our brains, the right *information* into our minds—then we will change as a direct result of that.** Does that make sense?

Now there's a problem with that theory about change. It's not *wrong*. There's a lot of truth to it. Romans 12 in the bible, for instance, says we are "*transformed* by the *renewing of our minds*." That's a way of saying that you *do* need to *think* differently in order to change. **Information and right thinking is a necessary component in how we change.** But I would argue—and I'm going to propose that the *bible* argues, ***information alone is incomplete to change us as human beings. That information is great, it's needed—but information alone does not lead to transformation.***

But before we get to why I think the *bible* says that, let me just prove it to you practically. ~~Let me try and help you see that *thinking*, that simply *having the right information* isn't all you need.~~ Just by show of hands, if you feel comfortable doing that, how many of you have thought, at some point in your life "I need to eat better," and then proceeded to absolutely not eat better at all? So, a good many of us. Hands down. **So what you're saying there is that you had the right *thinking*** ("I need to eat better"), **you had the right *information*, and yet it didn't lead to any *formation*.** Okay, by show of hands again, how many of you have had the thought, at some point in your life, "I need to exercise more"? Okay, how many of you have had that thought, and then proceeded to absolutely not exercise for a long period of time? Yep. So, again, what we're saying is that we had the right *information*—we *thought* the right thing—and yet somehow it still did lead to us becoming different kinds of people. Because **information alone does not lead to transformation.**

And on a similar note, has anybody checked back in with R. Kelly to see if he's developed the ability to fly yet? I'm gonna go ahead and wager that even though he "saw it," and even though he "believed it," he still didn't develop the ability to "do it." **So it would seem, from all of these real-life experiences, that human beings may need something beyond just right *thinking* and *information* to change as human beings. It would appear that *transformation* requires more than just *information*. That we need something more than just right *thinking* to change.**

So the question is, *what else do we need?* For that, let's take a look at Matthew 7. So this is Jesus, at the very end of his famous "sermon on the mount." He's just given his sort-of manifesto for what life looks like for followers of Jesus, and now he's wrapping it all up. And here's what he says, starting in v. 24:

[24] "*Everyone then who **hears these words of mine and [what's that next word] does them [or some of your translations will say "puts them into practice"] will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. [26] And everyone who **hears these words of mine and does not do them [or does not put them into practice]*****

*will be like a **foolish man** who built his house on the sand. [27] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”*

Now, I want you to pay very careful attention to what Jesus says here in this passage. The contrast he makes is *not* between those who *listen* to him, and those who *don't*. It's not between those who *know* the right things and people who don't. It's not between those who have *information* about the kingdom of God and those who don't. The contrast he makes, rather, is between those who have that information **and put it into practice**, and those who have that information and **do not put it into practice**. The distinction he makes is between those who *practice* what they know, and those who *don't*. Do you see that?

Which tells me that to Jesus, apparently, **information alone is not enough for transformation**. Otherwise, both guys in the story would've been in good shape. Jesus is saying that it's not enough to just *think* a certain way about the gospel or the kingdom of God or God himself. That's great and needed, but it *alone* will not *transform* you, will not change you, will not *form* you into the image of Jesus. **What will change you is knowing those things and then putting them into practice. To actually change, you have to not just know things, you have to do something with what you know.**

James says something very similar in the book James, chapter 1. He says it like this:

*Do not merely **listen to the word**, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says**. Anyone who listens to the word **but does not do what it says** is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and **continues in it**—not forgetting what they have heard, but **doing it**—they will be **blessed** in what they do.*

So in the words of Jesus, and James, and plenty of other people in the bible, **the way you change—the way you become like Jesus is not through just hearing things**. It's not just through acquiring information about God and Jesus and the Scriptures. **In order to grow and change and become more like Jesus, you need to do something with that information. You need to, in the words of Jesus, “put [that information] into practice.”**

Put another way, **a central piece of how we change is through our habits**: the things we *do* over and over again. Through the things that we “practice,” in Jesus' words. A guy by the name of James K.A. Smith wrote a book about all of this called *You Are What You Love*—I highly recommend it. In that book, he describes it this way: “the things we do, do things to us.” And in another place he elaborates and says, “there is no **formation** without **repetition**.” **Without putting in the work to change the habits we participate in, there will be little-to-no becoming more like Jesus**. If you refuse to change your habits, you most likely will not grow.

Now, that being said, right here, let me just pause for a second and speak to those of you who have been around church for a while. It's possible that as I talk about all this, you're getting a little nervous. Because when you hear all these things about our habits and “practice” and what we do, you're thinking that sounds a lot like religion, or legalism, or what is commonly called “works.” In your mind, that sounds like we're talking a lot about what *we do* to grow and not talking *enough* about what *God does* to grow us. And I want you to know I hear that concern, I really do. But I want you to know that that isn't my heart

at all. In saying that we change through our *habits*, I'm not trying to say that God *isn't* ultimately the source of change in our lives. By saying our habits change us, I'm not trying to say that the Holy Spirit *doesn't change us*. I'm not saying that God's grace *doesn't* change us. Rather, I'm trying to say that our *habits* are one very important avenue the Holy Spirit *uses* to change us.

So in Galatians 6, Paul puts it like this:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

So here, we have the Apostle Paul—who was huge fan of grace, by the way—huge fan of the idea that God is the active agent in our lives as followers of Jesus. But he actually says here that to think that you can change without changing your habits (what you “sow”) would be like *mocking* God. Because God works *through our habits* to change us—it's one of the primary means he uses. So evidently in Paul's mind, God's grace and our effort aren't always enemies. Sometimes they are, but not necessarily. Sometimes they work hand in hand.

I think Dallas Willard nuances this out well when he says this:

*Grace is not opposed to **effort**, it is opposed to **earning**.*

What we all want to guard against as followers of Jesus is actually an attitude of *earning*. We want to guard against the mindset that God's *affections for us* are dependent upon our effort. Against the mindset that we have to *earn* God's acceptance of us. We want to guard against *earning*, but not against *effort*. **If you want to grow and change and mature as a follower of Jesus, effort will be required.**

Because the simple fact is that we in many ways are the cumulative effects of our habits. We become who we are through the things we do over and over again.¹ If you read the bible every morning when you wake up, over time you're going to become the type of person that *wants* to read their bible every morning when they wake up. If you hit the snooze button 4 times every morning before you get up, you're going to become the type of person that *wants* to hit the snooze button 4 times every morning before you get up. This isn't rocket science, but it's worth pointing out. **So much of what we become is shaped by the things we do over and over again. So if you want to change as a human being, an awful lot of that is going to happen through your habits.**

Now here's the thing: this is how we change, regardless of whether or not we *realize* it's happening. **We all want to change, and we all *are changing*.** Every one of us is being *formed right now*, as we speak. **To be a human being is to *constantly be formed by various sources*.** I can promise you will not be who you are right now ten years from now (some of you are like “thank God.” Well, easy there, I didn't say it would be *better*, just *different*.). You will be different. You will change. **Formation isn't a Christian thing, it's a human thing.** To be human is to *constantly change*. If you don't believe me, think about people you knew in high school, that you're now friends with on Facebook. Do you not sometimes find yourself looking at things they post from afar and going, “wow, *they've* changed.” Now, that might be how

¹ This is from a great (but long) quote from a guy named R.J. Snell.

they *look*, that might be the types of *clothes* they wear, it might be the types of things they *post* about—but you often find yourself going “man, they’ve really *changed* since high school.” I am 1000% positive people think that about me when they see that I’m a *pastor* now. I bet plenty of people who knew the stupid stuff I did in high school go “oh he’s a pastor now. I did not see that one coming.” The point is that to be a human being is to constantly change. We all change whether we *realize* we’re changing or not.

So the question the bible poses is simply, *in what direction* are you changing? What’s the trajectory that you’re on? Are you changing to become more like Jesus? Or are you becoming *less* like Jesus? Are you changing for the better or for the worse? And a big part of what will determine that answer is the *habits* you participate in over time.

I’ll give you an example. The most frequent issue I see people having—and especially younger people—are related to *apathy* and *passivity*. People tell me often that their biggest problem is that they “just don’t care” about their relationship with Jesus. They “just don’t care” how they are doing spiritually. They “just don’t care” about making disciples. That’s *apathy* and *passivity* at work. And the thing about apathy is that it feels *insurmountable*. It feels like apathy just happens to you and you can’t do anything about it. And maybe it did. But simultaneously, here’s what I know: the average American watches four hours of TV a day. Four *hours*. Now I want you to think about what it is you’re *practicing* when you watch TV. You’re sitting or laying down, and having other people entertain or hold your attention. You’re *practicing passivity*. You’re *practicing apathy*. For four hours every day, we are *practicing* being passive and apathetic. Now, do you not think that *anything* you practice for four hours a day, you’re going to get *really good* at? Imagine if you practiced playing *classical piano* for four hours every day. How quickly would you get really good at it? Pretty quickly, right? And so inversely, how good do you think four hours of TV a day, or Netflix, or Instagram—whatever it is—is making us all at being apathetic and passive? **Our habits shape us into certain kinds of people.**

So here’s what we want to do with this series: **we want to ask and answer the question, *how can we set up habits in our life to form us into the image of Jesus?*** As followers of Jesus, how do we structure our habits in a way that helps us become more like who God made us to be? Because as followers of Jesus, we don’t just want to *change*. We want to *change* to reflect more accurately who *Jesus is* to those around us. There is far more at stake for us than just shedding a few pounds or becoming more physically healthy. So **we want to figure out how to “hack” our everyday habits to allow the Holy Spirit to change us.** Does that make sense? We want to figure out how to “put into practice” the type of habits that will make us more like Jesus.

Now, the “habits” that followers of Jesus throughout history have participated in have often been called “spiritual disciplines.” Things like *reading the bible, praying, fasting, sabbathing/resting*—things like that. Those are the types of habits that when practiced over the long haul, turn us into a certain type of person. That form us into the image of Jesus. So the plan going forward is that **around the beginning of each new year in our church, we will do a series like this one called *Formation*. But each year, we will focus on a different “*discipline,*” or *practice*.** We’ll unpack the *ins* and *outs* of each practice. We’ll explore how that particular practice shapes and forms us, and then we’ll try to get very *practical* on how to practice it and practice it well. And our goal will be to over the long haul, “put into practice” the types of things that make us more like Jesus as a result.

And *this year*, we're going to focus in on the *practice* of **prayer**. We'll be focusing on how the Holy Spirit uses *prayer* to change us. **There may be no stronger example of the gap between knowledge and practice for followers of Jesus than prayer.** I don't know that there's any better proof of how *information* doesn't lead to *transformation* than when it comes to us praying. Here's what I mean: I don't think there's really any *debate* among Christians that prayer is a fantastic thing to do. And yet at the same time, a *lot* of Christians struggle with prayer. I don't know of hardly *any* followers of Jesus that would honestly say "you know what? I think I'm pretty much killing it when it comes to prayer. I pray every bit as much as I should." In fact, it's quite the opposite: I think a lot of followers of Jesus feel pretty defeated when it comes to prayer. So it would seem that **we all know we should pray, and yet it hasn't led to us more regularly practicing prayer.** And prayer being the relatively simple thing it is (just *talking with God*), we probably all have *some* idea of *how to do it*. And yet most followers of Jesus I know of, if they're honest, would say they don't pray very much, or at least as much as they feel like they should. So **this is a prime example of how the right information doesn't necessarily lead to transformation.**

To be completely honest, this is very much the case with *me*. *Other areas* of my life as a follower of Jesus I feel like have grown *tremendously* over the years. But for me, I often feel like I haven't grown in prayer much at all. Regardless of the fact that I know how *helpful* prayer is, I know how *good* it is to participate in, I still often find myself going very long periods of time without praying very much at all. So all that to say, sometimes as a pastor, you get to teach out of your *strengths*. Often I get to teach you guys something that the Holy Spirit has grown me in and then can speak from experience on how he accomplished it. That will definitely *not* be the case for this series. More than anything it will be me telling you what God is *currently* teaching me, and my struggles alongside that, and praying that God uses all of that to grow all of us together in prayer. Hope that's okay.

Now, I think when it comes to *why* we don't pray, there are a few *different* causes at work. I think some of us have a *relational* hang-up with prayer: we have a dysfunctional relationship with God, which *results* in a dysfunctional relationship to prayer. I think others of us have an intellectual or theological hang-up with prayer that makes prayer very psychologically difficult. I think others still have an *experiential* hang-up with prayer—prayer doesn't seem like it has worked in the past. We've prayed for important, massive, life-altering things, and it feels like we got hung out to dry. And because prayer doesn't seem like it's worked before, we don't think it's gonna work now either. So in this series, we're going to look a little at *each* of those hang-ups. So if you're thinking that prayer is too big of a jump for you because of those things, hang in there, and we'll try to talk some about each of them as we go along.

But for today, I just want to leave us with a *vision* of how prayer *changes* us. **That's the big idea with this series, is that our *habits*—the things we *practice*—are actually the things that over time form us into the image of Jesus.** So let's just ask and answer the question before we close, *how does prayer change us as human beings?*

I think the primary way that prayer changes us is that it goes to war against our *self-reliance*. From what I've gathered, I think that one of people's biggest barriers, one of *my* biggest barriers, to genuine, lasting, satisfying relationship with God is *self-reliance*. Now I know that feels weird to say because in our culture, self-reliance is almost always seen as a *virtue*. It's what we're aiming for so much of the time in our lives, to be completely self-sufficient and self-reliant in every way we can be. And there is much of

that the bible would *celebrate*. Making wise decisions, taking responsibility for your own actions, all of those things are *great* according to the bible. But **when that ventures into total self-reliance—the belief that you don’t need anyone or anything other than yourself in life—the bible starts speaking negatively about it really quickly.**

In Luke 18, Jesus rails against a Pharisee who “trusted in himself that he was righteous.” That’s self-reliance all the way. Proverbs dunks on self-reliance repeatedly: “whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool,”² “trust in the Lord...and *lean not* on your *own* understanding.”³ **The Scriptures are going to over and over again point out that if you don’t think you need anything or anyone outside of yourself, you are actually at a disadvantage when it comes to following Jesus.** Because the very act of following Jesus involves *first acknowledging* that Jesus has done something for you that you cannot do for yourself, that he has made you right with God when you had no ability to accomplish that yourself. So total self-reliance is a huge liability when it comes to a relationship with Jesus.

But my guess is that even though many of us in this room know that we need help from outside ourselves, our prayer lives don’t exactly reflect that we know that. My guess is that if we were to evaluate how self-reliant we truly are, *purely based on* how often we pray, the results would be very revealing. I know they would be for me. **I think if I’m completely honest, the reason I don’t pray is because I believe, deep down, that my action is more effective than prayer is. Because I believe, at least functionally, that I am more effective than prayer is.** So why pray when I can just *act*? Why ask God to fix things when I can just fix things myself? And that right there is the *anthem* of self-reliance.

Now here’s the thing: deep down, we know that self-reliance is a lie. And the catastrophes of life often reveal that it’s a lie. When suffering hits, when hardship comes, when that big job interview is on the line, when a friend or family member is rushed to the hospital—in those moments we realize that we need something and someone outside of ourselves. We realize in those moments that we need not only God himself but also other people—people that can walk with us through whatever it is. But so often, even after big moments like that, a few months or years pass by and we start believing, yet again, that we can handle life on our own. Self-reliance re-establishes itself in our lives.

But the problem with self-reliance is that it *robs* us of so much. It steals from us so much of what life is about. For starters, *gratitude*. **The person who has only himself to thank for everything he has, really has no one to thank at all.** True gratitude requires thanking someone or something outside of yourself. And if you go through life believing that you don’t need anything or anyone else, you won’t ever experience true gratitude. But self-reliance also robs us of *intimacy* with other people. **If you don’t think you need anybody else, you will struggle to have meaningful friendships with other people.** Because you don’t really *need* them. So as soon as friendships get difficult, as soon as they get complicated, you will most likely push those people away. Since those people aren’t necessary to you, there’s no reason to keep them around when things get tough. Self-reliance can be *extremely* isolating.

And on the flip side, self-reliance *gives* us some things that *none of us* want. For instance, *anxiety*. If every single thing in your life is completely dependent upon your own effort and abilities, that creates just a *bit* of pressure doesn’t it? Believing that everything in your life is up to you is a crushing weight to carry

² Proverbs 28:26a

³ Proverbs 3:5

around on your shoulders. And another thing self-reliance generates is *pride*. I can assure you, you have never met a more arrogant person than the person who believes they accomplished everything on their own, without help from anybody else. Pride and arrogance are inevitable for self-reliant people.

But **perhaps the most destructive thing about self-reliance is what it does to our relationship with God. Self-reliance trains us to see God as mostly unnecessary.** *Helpful?* Sure. *Nice to have around?* Yeah. But not necessary. I mean after all, I can probably handle most everything myself. God's just there in case I want an extra "boost." ~~Do you see this?~~ If you buy into the lie of self-reliance, an actual vibrant relationship with the God of the universe will feel so unattainable. But—spoiler—God doesn't buy our self-reliance act. He doesn't buy it at all. In fact, **he believes that our joy is directly linked to how God-reliant we are.**

And **prayer—at least the way it's presented in the bible—is a full-scale attack on the lie of self-reliance. Practicing prayer on a regular basis is a way of directly refuting the lie that you're good on your own.** It's a snub to every self-sufficient bone in your body. And I think that's why it's so difficult to practice, but also so *helpful* to practice. **Prayer is choosing to over and over again say "I need something outside of myself. I need someone outside of myself."** Even when parts of you don't want to *believe* that—prayer is choosing to live as if you do. **Every time you pray, you're rebelling against self-reliance.** And *that's* how prayer changes you.

So to help with that, we're gonna spend some time for the next four weeks talking about how to participate in prayer, and participate in it *well*. We're even going to devote some time *in the Gathering* each week to prayer. But for today, I just want to ask: **are you ready to refute the lie of self-reliance?** Have you come to a place where you're ready to acknowledge that you need someone outside of yourself? Even if in you, you don't find a ready desire to participate in prayer *itself*, are you ready for the life that prayer *offers*? Are you ready for the freedom from the *isolation*, and the *fear*, and the *anxiety* the *arrogance*, that self-reliance generates? Because if you're ready to be done with all that, believe it or not, you're ready to pray.

And on that note, let me pray for all of us, and then we'll talk some about how we're going to *practice* prayer.

Okay, so we're gonna do something a little different today. Instead of transitioning directly into a time of worship and communion like we normally do, I want to spend just a few minutes telling you about some things we've set up to help you *practice* prayer during this series. As we've said already, **we have no interest in just teaching you more information about prayer. We have tremendous interest, however, in helping you regularly practice prayer.**

So in order to do that, one of the guys on our City Church teaching team has assembled for us five weeks worth of *prayer prompts*: things for us to pray for or pray about. So this series will take us five weeks to complete, and for every day during those five weeks, there is a prayer *prompt*. So the first one, the one for today, says: *Thank God for being a good and loving Father. Celebrate him for remaining faithful to us even when we aren't faithful to him. Celebrate him for sending Jesus to bring us into relationship with him.* So they just give you some areas to focus on when you pray. They're all pretty

straightforward, but they also vary a good bit in their focus. And we've set up three different ways for you to get these prayer prompts—you can utilize whichever works best for you:

1. The first, is that we've gotten these fancy booklets printed (*way fancier than we are*)—you can get one on the way out or you can print them off yourself from our website at citychurchknox.com. They've got checkboxes by each day so you can check them off, if you're type-A like me and that gives you a strangely satisfying feeling to do that.
2. Or, if you'd like, you can actually have these prayer prompts *texted* straight to your phone each day during the series. If you just think you're likely to lose the book, or forget about it, this might be a good option because it'll show up on your phone every day and you'll either have to read it or dismiss it. With this, you have the option to pick the time of day you want to receive the text: morning, afternoon, or evening. So you can pick the time of day you generally have the margin to slow down for a second and pray, and have them sent you at that time. To do this, you just have to text the word MORNING, AFTERNOON or EVENING to the number 9-10-11, and you'll be squared away. So maybe you want to do that.
3. And then lastly, we will be posting these to Facebook, Twitter, and Insta-Story each day. So if you do the social media thing (sounds so funny—"if you're on the Twitters with the rest of the young folk!"), you can get the prayer prompts there. I know that might sound weird—to put prayer prompts on the thing that is maybe many of our *biggest distractions from prayer*. But that's kind of the point. The hope is that if you're just killing time one day and clicking through Insta-stories or something, you'll see that prompt and think "oh yeah, praying is probably a better use of my time right now." That make sense?

So booklet, text messages, and via social media: those are the three ways to access daily prayer prompts over the course of this series.

And on that note, I would encourage you to do your best to practice it each day. And here's why. One of the best selling books on the power of habit says that it takes about 21 days to form a habit. Chances are, if you do *anything* for 21 days straight, it will become easier to do that thing *after* those 21 days than *harder* to do it. So there's actually 35 days of prayer prompts. That gives you 21 days *plus* several *do-overs*. But I'd be willing to bet if you put in 21 straight days of prayer at some point in this series, you will be well on your way to making prayer an frequent part of your life. If you want to develop a frequent prayer life, this gives you a real good shot at it right here. Make sense?

So all these things are just ways for us to make that effort as doable as possible for you. I'd love to see, as a result of this series, us become a *vibrant, praying* church together. I'd love for people when they come around City Church to go "man, that church believes that God is real and that he answers prayer." And that starts with us each making it a regular part of our everyday lives. And that's what this series is all about.

But as we said, we're not just talking about tips and tricks here. We're talking about the Holy Spirit working *through* our efforts to form us more and more into the image of Jesus. So as we close we're just gonna sing one song together, that's all about that passage in Matthew 7, about *building our life* around the habits and practices of Jesus. So let's stand together, and let's sing and ask God to breathe on and work through our habits to make us more like Jesus, amen?