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Rhythm, Part 5
By Matt Chandler

Matthew chapter six...I won't go along with you tonight. It's been such a phenomenal weekend. We baptized over twenty people, or seen twenty people get in the water and say Jesus has healed me, touched, made me whole, and the stories have been all over the map and it's been so perfect and so beautiful. It's been a great weekend.

So let's review a little bit. At Jesus' baptism he is praying; and the night before he selects the twelve disciples he goes up on a mountain and for the entire night he prays. Then, early in the morning he is praying, and late at night he is praying. You should start to see an established pattern. At the transfiguration he is praying; before the cross he is praying; and, then, on the cross he is praying. So, Jesus more than he is just going to habitually teach on prayer, he is going to live prayer. In fact, it's probably safe to say that prayer isn't so much a thing Jesus commands us to do as much as it is the way of Jesus. It's like He gets up and he walks around, but he never gets off His knees. Are you tracking with me? It's like He says "amen" but he doesn't mean it. He always seems to be connected, inseparably connected, to God the Father. He doesn't just put it into some kind of disciplined process, it's not as if Jesus had this time period in the morning that was set aside for just such a thing. I think to do that is probably smart, and I do think there's some discipline in it because Paul is going to say "...labor with me in prayer..." It's a weird little phrase in scripture, "...work with me here in prayer..." but it's like Jesus is always connected, always praying. So, we talked last week that this is more than just a discipline to Jesus, it's the way things are for Him.

We talked about what that might look like for us, like when we wake up in the morning there should be this gratitude in us because we did, and then as we eat breakfast even if your breakfast was something you bought at Starbucks. Most of the world does not eat like us and cannot afford \$19 cups of coffee. Then, as our children walk in there should be gratitude that they're healthy because a lot of kids are not well fed and safe. And, that as we live our lives out there should be this connection; constant praying that goes on between us and the Father. What do I do here? What do I say here? How do you want me to play this? What do you want me to do here? Jesus, not only is He going to teach it, not only is He going to live it, but the rest of scripture is going to join Him. For example, in Hebrews, it says, "Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence." It's the writer of Hebrews' way of saying, "I know you're a scoundrel, and I know it's been a while, but you're still welcome. I know you're not perfect. You can pretend all you want for everybody else, but I see you and you're still welcome." Then, in First Timothy Paul's going to say, "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer." In First Thessalonians, it says, "Pray without ceasing;" and, the word ceasing in the Greek means ceasing. Just so you can know. That is the word in the original language. Don't stop praying. Then, James - you've got to love James because for all of the scriptures that seem to be so confusing, James is just like having a conversation over a cup of coffee - is

going to say, “If you’re happy, you have to pray. But, if you’re sad, you ought to pray. If you’re healthy, you should really pray. But, if you’re sick, you ought to pray.” I mean James just very simply is going to say that this thing is the heart beat of who we are, this thing we call prayer.

But, here’s the deal, I don’t think that I’m surprising anybody in here tonight. Whether you have been in church your whole life or this is the first time you’ve ever been, that God’s people pray to him is not shocking or revolutionary. I don’t think we’re on to anything, in fact if we sat down and asked how many sermons you’ve heard on prayer, how many books you’ve read on prayer, or how many prayer meetings you’ve been to... I mean, if we lay that out I think that you would find a mountain of cognitive knowledge about the subject. Here are two questions. Question one: Why is it so hard though, or why do so many of us find it so difficult to pray with any kind of real consistency? Now, we excel at prayer when our life blows up all over the place. I mean, when things go horribly wrong, all of the sudden we become the most eloquent – “...oh father where art thou...” – I mean, we can tear it up, man. For hours we can weep and go, “...fix this...help me...I love you...I was...I’m sorry I haven’t been here in two years...” and we excel at prayer when things go bad; but why is it so difficult for us to do this with any kind of consistency?

Here is the second question: Why does it matter? Well, let me answer question two right off the bat. It matters because everything that really matters in life is beyond the control of man. Everything that truly matters in life is beyond the control of man. Zeal for Christ, which one of you can turn that on? I mean, is that not the reason why church for so many of us has become so frustrating: because we’ve come to church and we’ve heard the “love Jesus more” and we’re like “Yeeeaah, how?” Is that no one else’s story? That we want to love Him more but there is nothing there in our heart. We get motivated for a moment but no real life change is going on. We keep – that’s why we kind of openly mock here a lot of Christian culture, like the bumper stickers, and little phrases, that really have brought very few us into any kind of real freedom.... I mean, no body can switch on a zeal for Jesus. You can switch on church attendance. You can learn evangelical language. Please don’t, but you can. Who can switch on faith, more faith? Who can switch on a zeal for Christ? Who can make their kids love Christ? Huh? You are talking a terrifying ordeal there. Who can make their kids love Jesus? I mean, you can crush their little spirits and make them obey every rule in the book, but you cannot make them love Jesus. Clean conscience, which one of you can work that into being? Peace. Where in the world do we find peace? Forgiveness of sin...shall I keep going? The things that matter most in life cannot be produced by men.

So, here’s what I want us to do... Prayer isn’t just hard for us, it’s always been hard for everybody because it’s a humility issue, and it’s a pride vs. humility issue. We pray when we’re finally humble, which is why we pray so well when our little facade of greatness gets blown to kingdom come. Because you’ve got no pride left, so it’s easy to pray. Now, I know prayer is difficult because even the disciples came up to Jesus and said, “Ok, we’ve heard you teaching this and we’re watching you do it, so how do we do this? How do we pray?” So if the men who are touching, following, experiencing Jesus

full on are going “how do we do this” I think it’s a legitimate question for us. Here’s what I want us to do. I want us to look at Jesus’ answer to the question “how do we pray?” He’s going to tell us what not to do, and then he’s going to tell us what to do. Depending on how the Spirit moves in here, we might stop in the middle and pray a little bit, then teach some more and stop again and pray a little bit, and then teach some more. We’ll just feel it out and see what the Lord wants to do in here.

Let’s read Matthew six starting in verse five: “And when you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. And truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.” So, the question goes out how do we pray. Jesus answers like this: let me tell you how we don’t pray. We don’t pray to climb the Christian social ladder, and we don’t pray to impress those around us. That’s what he says first. We don’t use prayer to impress. That’s not what it’s for. So, if you pray in ’05 English when you’re by yourself, but when you get in front of a crowd you downshift into King James you probably need to examine the heart. Maybe you’ll find whatever you find there is OK; but, I think that we need to be weary if we pray one way in private but then when it becomes show time, when we’re around the circle of squeezing hands - if you’re Baptist you know what I’m talking about: we stand in a circle holding hands, one of us prays and squeezes the hand to the right, they pray and squeeze the hand to the right, and it goes all the way around the circle. It doesn’t skip, it doesn’t flip over, and nobody goes twice. That is the rule of the circle of squeezing hands! Pray with Bapticalists, though, and it’ll be all over the place, hands will be up...it’s different, but... In all of this, Jesus is teaching don’t use my name to make much of you. Remember the tax collector that we talked about last week, and the Pharisee. The Pharisee stood up and whom did Jesus say he was praying to? Himself. So, he walked into the temple and Jesus said, “...A Pharisee was praying to himself.” It was Jesus’ way of going, “He wasn’t praying to me! Because men don’t boast about themselves to me because I’m huge and you’re not! You’re really tiny; and, nothing you do is really impressive after I created the whole universe and stuff.” Don’t use my name to make much of you. Don’t do it because if you do, you’ve got your reward. But I would rather prayers be answered, right?

Let’s keep going. “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do. For they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.” Two things here. Number one: this is not an argument against lengthy prayers, and I know this isn’t an argument against lengthy prayers because two chapters later from now Jesus is going to pray the entire night. So, this is not an argument against lengthy prayers. It is an attack on Voodoo or witchcraft. If you don’t have a background in Voodoo or witchcraft, let me explain. In Voodoo or witchcraft, you will quote basically a mantra. So, you will have this one line, or series of lines, like spells, and if you say them right and you say them enough, then the power of that mantra is released or whatever. Now, this is Jesus’ way of saying, “we have a relationship, we don’t cast spells. I am a loving Father who desires conversation. It’s not that if you pray the right things I do this. I’m not Santa. I’m God.” That’s what’s happening here. Save your mantra, that’s not how I

work. Verse 8: “So, do not be like them for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”

Verse 9: “Pray then, in this way...” How many of you have these next few lines memorized? It’s called the Lord’s Prayer. If you ever try to say this out loud with a group it always gets real weird at the transgression vs. debtors part because some of us memorized it debt and debtors, and some of us memorized it transgressions and transgressors. Sorry, it’s just weird. I’m in the New American which is – and for those of you going, “that’s one of my problems with Christianity, it’s all these different kinds of bibles,” no they’re not different kinds of bibles, there’s word for word translations, and then there’s phrase by phrase translations. That’s the only difference. Some people take a phrase and pull the meaning from the phrase others go word by word. I’m in the New American and it’s a word by word, and so it’s better. I mean, use whatever. Use what you want I’m just... Verse 9: “Pray then in this way: Our Father, who is in Heaven...” We find ourselves in a difficult century in which the power of this to really be known, because for a lot of us the word father doesn’t really carry a lot of positive connotations. For a lot of us who have been abandoned, a lot of us who have been wounded, and a lot of us who have been abused “father” doesn’t carry the beauty that it’s meant to carry here. Here’s what he’s saying, father is this really beautiful and descriptive word because it implies two things: both that he is above us and more powerful than us, and yet he knows our name and loves us. Here’s the thing if I could take just a second tonight and harp on this, I really feel like if we could ever get out of the “we”s and “us”s, and start really believing the “I”s and “me”s – what I’m talking about is we really don’t have any problem with Jesus loves us, some of us have a painful time with Jesus loves me. Like the song that we sang just a minute ago, My King, the words from that, I mean it’s hundreds of years old, it’s from an Augustinian monk named Augustus who wrote that, and Bleeker incorporated some of that into his song My King, we sang there at the end. That first part, that “...who am I, oh King, that you would notice me, maker of the stars and depths of the sea. You who created such grandeur that you would know my name...” And, this “our father, my father” is “you’re my protector, my comforter, you hope for me, you dream for me, you love me, you provide, you know my name...our father, my father, God, creator of all, knows my name. Our father, who is in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.” Hallowed has kind of made its way out of our language. Anybody heard the word hallowed this week? Probably not. Hallowed is another way to say glory. So, what’s just happened here is He’s doing this: this prayer is “My comforter, my provider, my protector, the one who knows my name, may my life glorify you. My I be a reflection of your love, your mercy, your glory, your beauty, and your perfection. May I reflect for the world how good you’ve been and how good you are.” That’s what this prayer is.

The funny thing about adulthood, is that one day you just wake up and your there. Like, it comes out of nowhere, at one moment your like crazy, and then it’s Friday night and your at home watching a Tom Brokaw special. And, you don’t really know how it happened and you start thinking back like, “man, what happened...” So, anyway, last Friday night I was watching this Tom Brokaw special, and it was this two hour – anybody else watching, yea, I told you guys from the outset that we’re not cool – show

on the state of evangelical movement in the United States of America. And, so I'm watching Brokaw interview all these pastors, and there were some really great things said, but there were about three different times that I cringed. I was like "no, please don't let anybody be watching that but Christians." Did anyone else see this? In a lot of ways, the gospel, the good news of Jesus, has been taken and hi-jacked by some well-intended men and women who think that the gospel has some kind of political purpose or some kind of moral purpose. Now, the gospel has ramifications for both, but in its essence it's neither. "Let me reflect your patience, your mercy, your grace, your love...use my life. Let me love my wife in such a way that the world sees you. Let me love my kids in such a way that the world sees you. Let me spend money in such a way that the world sees you. Let me live as a neighbor such that the world might see you. Glorify your name. Hallowed be thy name. My protector, my provider, my comforter, use my life to bring you glory. That's what's happened so far. My Father, who is in Heaven, hallowed be your name."

"Your kingdom come, your will be done." Now, this third part is about courage. If you follow Jesus long enough, He's eventually going to get you to that place where you don't want to go. If you really follow Him, He's going to get you to this ledge and eventually ask you to walk off of it. For a lot of us, it's this real crisis that occurs because we're following Him and it's working and we're following Him and it's bringing joy, and we're following Him and He's stirring us, and we get to this ledge and He's like, "now, come on." So many of us when we're at that moment are just like, "no, no, I can't do it. I can't do it. I don't know that I can do it." Here's where I think a lot of us really start to become damaged. We say no, but continue to do the "Christianity" thing that we know we're supposed to be doing. We continue going to church, continue to read our bibles, continue to listen to Christian CD's, continue to do all that kind of stuff; but, there's no fuel in the car. Are you tracking with me? This is a prayer of courage, "give me the courage to follow you. Not my will, your will." Jesus is going to pray this exact prayer in the garden. We read it last week. "Not my will, your will...I don't like this, but I'm in. I trust that you're beyond me, smarter than me, see more than me, love me more than I love myself. Give me courage to follow you." If it hasn't happened yet, just wait until he gets into your money. Wait until you get to that place where He's like, "Umm, do you really need all that? Hey, do you know if you just downgraded to that, what we could do over here or what I could do over here? Hey, if you would understand that letting this go is going to give you more life..." Wait until he gets into your relationship. "Hmm, you've been a little bit of a betrayer, it's time to confess." "I'm alright, just give me ten years to work it out." Just wait. Everybody finally gets walked up to the ledge, everybody. "Give me the courage to follow you. Give me the courage to follow you."

"Our Father who is in Heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven." Let's do verse 11: "Give us this day our daily bread." This will probably forever be known as the Paul Mathis verse here. I was really tempted to chunk out a loaf of bread to you, but we've still got litigation pending from the first time. I preached a whole sermon on this. There are two parts to this and we've got to get them both to understand the fullness of it. The first part is, "give us today." There are all these beauties right now. This is this prayer, "save me from the guilt of my past and the

anxiety over my future and let me be here. Give me today. Let me see today. Let me be grateful today. Let me walk in the beauty of today. It's been a dark week. Forgive me Jesus. Tomorrow is scary, but tomorrow is yours. So, don't let me be torn up over guilt from yesterday and be weighed down by the anxiety of tomorrow. Give me today.”

Then, he says, “our daily bread” not our daily steak, our daily bread. Here's what this means here. I don't think this is about simple living. I don't think that this “give us this day our daily bread” is about you should just eat bread. I think what's happening here is Jesus is saying, “protect us from us.” “Give us our daily bread. Don't give me what I want, give me what I need.” I'm looking around this room and I think it's safe to say that every human being in this room has lived long enough to be grateful that God didn't give something we begged for a couple of years ago. Like my daughter: the only vegetable she wants is candy corn. That's really the only vegetable she wants, and we have this huge bowl of them that we have to continue to lift up higher. My daughter is starting to become a little bit like Tom Cruise in Mission: Impossible. I mean, there are pullies and ropes and all sorts of weird things to get up there and get it. That's what she wants; and, if you put that thing on the floor, she'd eat every bit of it until she was in this sugar-induced coma. She would eat every bit of it, and then vomit everywhere. I mean, she would eat, and eat, and eat, and eat, and eat, and eat, and eat, and eat. It's what she wants, but it's not what she needs. This is a scary prayer, too. It's a prayer that we're short sighted. “Don't just give me what I want. Give me what I need.” Sometimes we don't know what we need.

I baptized this beautiful, young woman today at the nine. Her name is Cara. Really I've been seeing Cara for years. When I was teaching at Abilene, her brother was there, and she would drive out to Abilene on Tuesday nights just to worship with us, there at the Metro. Now, here at the Village, she's just kind of been with us for a while, and she had this godly, awesome father who died when she was three. Then, she's had all these physical problems all her life. Stuff in her body shuts down and she's always in pain... So, she's kind of telling me her story a while back, and I'm just going, “man, this girl can't catch a break.” I'm kind of lamenting for her. Then, she downshifts on me, and says, “I can't tell you how grateful I am for how difficult my life has been at some times because it's been those difficulties that Christ has used to woo me unto himself.” I mean, what a paradox for most of us. We're like, “what?” Because Cara just said “what I needed, not what I wanted, what I needed in order for me to know Jesus deeply was some dark days.” “Give me daily bread. Give me what I really need, not just what I want. Protect me from me.”

Let's keep reading. “Pray then in this way: Our Father who is in Heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.” Verse 12: “And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Now, I think these two have to be tied together. This text is a perfect example, once again, how Jesus is lining us up with how things really are. Here's what I think is happening here: I will promise you that the forgiveness of others will become easier and easier the moment you start being honest about you. Are you following me? The forgiveness of the sins of others toward you will become easier and easier to forgive the more honest you are about you. And that's what's happening in this text when Jesus

says, “you ask for forgiveness because when you stand in front of me, when your life is finally revealed, if you will turn off the t.v., quiet down the soul and pay attention to the fact that you’re a liar, that you have used words to hurt, that you have been jealous. So, you haven’t killed anyone, you’ve only thought about it. When you come face to face with the depth of your own depravity...” Now, I know few of us want to walk down that path. Most of us want to medicate and ignore. But if you will come face to face with your own junk, I promise you that you will find it easier to forgive the junk of others.

Here’s the thing: my dad and I for years had this really horrible relationship. It was a dark place when I was growing up. My dad’s saved and a covenant member of this church now, but there were some really dark, dark, horrible, horrific, horrible, horrible days, the details of which I won’t share. And, as I got older, trying to forgive and let go, I started noticing that the things that I struggle with and the things that so haunt me are the same things that are in him, but his were full blown. I’m him. I’m him. In that terrifying and beautiful moment, a big part of my soul healed up because I realized that my dad is just in the same battle that I am. Forgive. Ask for forgiveness and forgive. On a side note, I know forgiving others is hard because you feel like if you do it you’re letting them off the hook, like they won’t have to pay for how they hurt you. But, just really practically, can I unpack this for you? They’re not on the hook, you are.

“Our Father who is in Heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Here’s verse 13: “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” In the life of every human being in here there’s what scriptures would call iniquity. It is not out right sin. The word means a “bent towards,” which means that everyone in this room has a “bent towards” disobedience and sin. The psalmist would say it this way: “Prone to wonder, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.” There’s iniquity and it looks different in all of us. Like, some us have this “bent towards” laziness. If we’re left to our own devices we’d never get dressed. Left to our own devices we would be unshaven with our drawers on and nothing else. That’s what we’re bent towards. Others of us, we’re bent towards lust. Not just sexual lust, and this is my personality, I am 100 or nothing. I mean, I don’t play many games because I must master them. I mean, that’s who I am. If I can’t dominate it, I don’t want to play it. So, mine, I have a lustful spirit. That’s my iniquity. God will hold that in check in all kinds of different ways. Some people it’s rage. Other people it’s jealousy. Other people it’s anger. I mean, we all have this bent in us, this thing that woos us if we’re not careful. And, this is just a prayer for help. “Help me. Help me. Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil. Help me. Heal this. Whatever’s broken inside of me that causes this to be there, heal it. Help me.”

“Our father, provider, protector, giver of life, bring glory to your name through my life. And give me the courage to follow you and let me see today and give me what I need, not what I want. And forgive me because I’m just as broken as the people I don’t want to forgive. And help me let go of bitterness and anger and help me heal.” Then, here’s the last part: “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.” Let me tell you how I want us to go tonight. This piece is there at the end just to remind us

that all the things that we've just talked about are impossible without Him. Like, can we be real honest? Does anybody else have people in here that you've been trying to forgive for eight years or longer? And, you think you've done it, your like, "I'm walking in such freedom," and they'll say something or do something, and you're like, "I knew it! I hate him!" Then, you've got to go, "wait I'm not over it." Then, you're back at the altar going, "Ok, this time." Anybody else? Thank you for being honest and not leaving me here all alone and cold. Isn't that a supernatural act, that ability to forgive, is it not? Is it not a supernatural act to let it go and go, "ok, Jesus I know, I know better, but for your grace I have to turn it over to you." That's got to be a supernatural deal. And, to know the peace of God as Father, the peace that passes understanding, like, that's what they need so badly in Waco tonight that God is Father, that peace that transcends a broken world. I mean, isn't that supernatural? You can't mantra peace into your heart. Especially when things go bad like they did this morning. And the human heart does not want God's name to be glorified, they want their name to be glorified. Sometimes they like to attach His name to it, but in the end... "Yours is the kingdom. Yours is the power. Yours is the glory. Help us." And how can we see today at the pace that we run? We need Him to slow us down. And how can we hold in check all our wants? I mean, we're no different than my two-and-a-half year old daughter. We'd sit there and eat the candy corn until we'd killed ourselves. We would. "Yours is the kingdom. Yours is the power. Yours is the glory."

I said it this way last week, so, I'll say it again to end. Then, I'm going to pray. We are the widow and control is an illusion. "Yours is the kingdom. Yours is the power. Yours is the glory." We'll end tonight like this: I'm going to pray over us and then we'll be dismissed into communion. Like, while I pray there's going to be these men and women and they're going to grab these glasses of wine and these baskets of bread. I want to make sure you hear me say this: if you're a guest here tonight and you're a Christian, we are so glad you're here, and please do communion with us. We are not closed on communion. If you're a lover of Christ, come and celebrate just the things that we've been talking about tonight. And let me say this: if you're here tonight and you're not a believer in Christ, I can't tell you how glad I am that you're here, and I'm just grateful that you'll hang out with us, and you're always welcome here, always. You don't have dress or talk any different way. This is my favorite part of this joint is this morning at the eleven, on this side of me while I was preaching there were two or three guys in suits who probably thought tattoos were wicked and sinful. Then, over here there were these guys just covered in them, worshiping. I was like, "come on, baby." I mean, you are welcome to come wrestle with this stuff here. We love you. I don't care what your story is. We love you. But, let me say this, communion is very, very sacred to us as a family. So, I'm so glad that you're here tonight, but communion is just for the family. I have to warn you that if you keep coming around, there's this chance out there that one day you'll eat it with us.

Father, I thank you for these men and women. You are our provider and our protector and you know our names. Still as much as I've thought on that and wrote on that and wrestled through that, it is such a thing for me that you know me. You don't know me because I can do certain things or not do certain things. Maybe because I'm yours, it's

completely built upon you, not me, and I want my life to glorify you and I know I'm not alone. I know there are so many of who aren't sure what it looks like, but we just want to spend our lives on you and we want you to paint beautiful pictures with us. We want to reflect the grace and mercy that you've shown to us, and the world around us. Will you help us? Will you give us the courage to follow you, because sometimes it's so scary to do so? Will you let us see today? Would you kind of overwhelm us with how good you've been to us today? As we walk outside will you let us feel the air? I pray tonight that as we eat food with family or friends and as we laugh and tell stories that we would kind of just be reminded of how holy a moment that is. Will you protect us from our wants? And, I pray that you'd forgive me for my shortcomings, my laziness, my betrayal of you. And, I pray that you would help extend the same grace and mercy that you extend to me to others. I ask for your help because I've still got this junk in me, I've still got this stuff that calls to me in weak moments and I hate that it's there. I want to be completely healed of it, and I want it to be removed from me, and I want to be whole. I know you're taking me there, but I want to confess in front of these people that sometimes it seems we're going the long way around the block; but, I trust you tonight.

I love you. You're dismissed.