

WE PRAY (Inspired by the Coldplay Song)

Week #1 of a 5-Week "Songs of Life" Series

Rev. Richard Maraj

Sunday, Oct. 12, 2025

LYRICS TO 'WE PRAY':

And so we pray ...

I pray that I don't give up, pray that I do my best
Pray that I can lift up, pray my brother is blessed
Praying for enough, pray Virgilio wins
Pray I judge nobody and forgive me my sins

I pray we make it, pray my friend will pull through
Pray as I take it unto others, I do
Praying on your love, we pray with every breath
Though I'm in the valley of the shadow of death

[Chorus]

And so we pray for someone to come and show me the way
And so we pray for some shelter and some records to play
And so we pray, we'll be singing "Baraye"
Pray that we make it to the end of the day
And so we pray, I know somewhere that Heaven is waitin'
And so we pray, I know somewhere there's something amazin'
And so we pray, I know somewhere we'll feel no pain
Until we make it to the end of the day

I pray that love will shelter us from our fears
Oh, I pray you trust to let me wipe off your tears
Confront all the pain that we felt inside
With all the cards we been dealt in life
Pray I speak my truth and keep my sisters alive

So for the ones who parted seas
For the ones who's followin' dreams
For the ones who knocked down doors
And allowed us to pass down keys

Pray that we speak with a tongue that is honest
And that we understand how to be modest
Pray when she looks at herself in the mirror
She sees a queen, she sees a goddess

[Chorus]

On my knees, I pray, as I sleep and wake
'Cause inside my head is a frightening place
Keep a smiling face, only by this grace
'Cause love's more than I can take, hey

And so we pray for someone to come and show me the way

And so we pray for some shelter and some records to play
And so we pray, we'll be singin' "Baraye"
'Til nobody's in need and everybody can say

La-la-la, la-la, la-la ... we pray, we pray ...
I know somewhere that Heaven is waitin', is waitin'
I know somewhere there's something amazin', something amazin'
Until we feel no pain ... we pray, we pray, we pray

MESSAGE:

So, this man named Larry went to a revival and listened to a preacher and was hoping that he could get some prayer for his hearing. And so, after a while, the preacher asked if anyone had any needs they wanted to be prayed over, if they would just come to the front of the altar. And when Larry got in line and when it was his turn, the preacher said, *"So what do you want me to pray for? What do you want me to pray about for you?"*

And he said, *"Well, I need you to pray for my hearing."*

And so, the preacher puts one of his fingers in his ear, and he puts his hand on his head, and he prays, and he prays and he prays. After a few minutes, the preacher takes his hands off, steps back, and eagerly asks Larry, *"So how is your hearing now?"*

And Larry says, *"I don't know, Reverend. It's not till next Wednesday."* [Congregants laugh]

It's one of those slow-release jokes. [Congregants laugh] It's just a delayed reaction.

So, today we're talking about prayer. So how many people believe in the power of prayer and that prayer absolutely makes a difference? And how many people here pray, but know you could probably pray a little more often, a little better? Anybody? And how many people would say that you are not quite sure how to pray better or how to pray more effectively? Anybody unsure about how to pray better and more effectively?

Today, we begin a five-week series on our fall version of the "Songs of Life." This is where I take famous hits and extract a spiritual message out of them. Some of them we've done in the past are "Take It Easy" by the Eagles; "Under Pressure" by Queen; "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" by Elton John; Bette Midler's "The Rose"; "We Can Work It Out" by The Beatles; Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground." We've done a couple by Coldplay – "Viva la Vida" and "Fix You."

And today we're going to do another another song by Coldplay called "We Pray."

How many people know this song? How many have heard this song? A few of us. It is a fabulous song. I heard it for the first time six months ago just messing around on YouTube. And then it came up, and I was just captured by this and thought it was powerful. And this is only the second song in 25 years of doing this that it actually had a spiritual message. Most of them don't; you've got to extract it. So, this is a really kind of cool gift and blessing to me.

And so, Chris Martin, who's the lead singer of Coldplay who really developed this song, said that he was in Taiwan. He woke up in the middle of the night and this song was in his head. He said he had no idea where it came from, and he just followed the path which led him. And this song really looks at the challenges and difficulties and frustrations of life, and also in the context of the conflict and the divisiveness; you know, the tensions and the polarization that goes through different communities and countries and our world.

And we have all this division and polarization, and yet we all pray for the same things. We all pray for love. We all pray for peace. We all pray for happiness. And we all pray that we have the strength to overcome and succeed and create a better life. And he said, if we would just get together, we would realize we have so much more in common than we do in terms of being different. We could achieve so much more together than just doing it alone.

And in that idea and context of wanting to show our oneness, he actually got singers from all over. He got one from Great Britain – himself; Nigeria; a Palestinian Chilean singer; and then also an Argentinian.

And this song on prayer hit the right chord, apparently, because it was a hit all over the world. It reached the top 10 in Croatia, Ireland, Lebanon, New Zealand and Poland. It reached the top 20 in Belgium and the United States. It reached the top 40 in Argentina, Austria, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. And it debuted at 87 on the Billboard charts. It's been recorded in English, Spanish, Arabic, Hindi and in Korean.

So, this song, to me, shows three important themes. **Number one, we all have struggles and hardships.** We all go through pain and losses and conflict. You know that in our lives we face trials. You know that we have bumps on the road you know as we move towards our goals and dreams. And so, it's important for us to understand and have compassion for each other. We're all experiencing the human condition; we're all going through so much of the same. And so, it's important for us to realize that and have compassion and understanding.

The second thing is that it teaches us that we need each other; that we absolutely cannot do it by ourselves. Martin Rutte once said, *"You have to do it for yourself, but you can't do it alone."* In the book of Philippians, Chapter 2, Verse 4, it says, *"Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."* The only way we can move forward in life, and really develop true happiness and peace and joy, is by working together; by supporting one another.

Even the song -- some lines in the song -- say praying for us to make it; hope we make it; and hope my brother pulls through ... that we want that for all of us. It isn't just about ourselves, individually. It's what is there for the collective good, you know? And so, you know, in life, if we really want to progress -- we think it's about competition, but it really is more about cooperation. How will we work together, you know, to maximize the benefits and blessings for all of us?

And then the third thing I think it really shows us is the importance of resilience. Because life is not easy. It is tough. And some lines in here say:

I pray I don't give up ...

I pray I make it to the end of the day ...

I pray and know that heaven is waiting ...

I know somewhere there's something amazing ...

So, there's a sense of hope. You know, there is this sense of inner strength and overcoming. And the answer to all of these is prayer. Prayer is the answer to having compassion and understanding. Prayer is the answer in knowing we need each other and to pray for each other. And prayer is the answer that gives us the strength and the resilience to move forward and overcome.

So, we are talking about prayer today and its incredible power and its importance of its role in life in terms of hope and happiness and fulfillment.

But my question to you is: What do you think prayer is? What is prayer for you? And why do you pray?

You know, from the beginning of time, cultures have engaged in some activity of what we would call prayer to some Higher Power or Energy or Spirit to call forth some good that we currently don't have

now. And so, from the beginning, it was praying for rain; praying for the crops to grow; praying for a hunt that would be able to feed the tribe; praying for anybody who might have been sick.

You know, we've really grown up with the idea that prayer is about asking for something that we would like to have that isn't currently being experienced, like inner peace or prosperity or having a job or clarity to make a good decision.

Co-founder of Unity, Charles Fillmore, really took that whole idea of prayer to a much higher level when he defined prayer. He said, "Prayer is man's steady effort to know God." That there's nothing wrong for asking for peace and guidance and prosperity and success ... But there's a higher level here. He's saying basically that prayer is our soul's yearning to know our connection and our oneness with our Source. Prayer is our soul's yearning to connect with our own divine nature.

When you think about it, prayer to me is an activity and the energy that we create and experience when we focus our hearts and minds on God: on that divine Presence; on that universal Intelligence. Prayer is about connecting and communicating in a way that helps us open up -- and as [Eric] Butterworth would say -- to help *"release that imprisoned splendor within us."* To bring forth the best and the beauty and the goodness in each and every one of us.

And the thing about it is: prayer has many forms. It's our steady effort to know God, but it comes in many forms. We can pray by praising; by thanking; by asking; by releasing. It could be formal; it could be spontaneous. It could be sung; it could be read; it could be chanted. There could be words; there could be silence. There could be physical movements, like, have you ever walked a labyrinth and meditated? Or a ritual, like lighting a candle.

I love how powerful prayer is, because it calms us; it centers and grounds us; and it unifies us.

When you think about it, all prayer is unifying, because most of the time when we pray, it's because we feel disconnected, we feel scattered, we feel fragmented. And prayer helps bring us back to center. It brings us back to peace. It brings us back to God.

When Jesus was asked, *"How should I pray?"* He said, *"You should pray like this: Our Father ..."* And hear how unifying that is -- to say, *"Our Father."* It means that there's only one Source that we're all connected to, which means that we're not only all connected to the Source; it means we're all connected to each other.

And sometimes we get to a place where we feel so fragmented and separate, we don't realize that. And Jesus is saying if you really want to pray in the most effective way, pray from that unified awareness that you're one with God, and that we are one and connected with one another. That's why Jesus said, *"The Father and I are one."* He prayed from a unified mindset that aligned him with that divine nature within him.

Another thing I love about prayer is that prayer is a creative activity. Prayer is the ability to help shape the invisible substance of God; to shape that unlimited goodness into whatever form we want it to show up in our lives -- the way we'd like to call it forth. Like, it could be to call forth more peace; to call forth more clarity; more wisdom or understanding or insight. It is unlimited! But prayer allows us the opportunity to shape through our imagination. Through our vision, we can literally create and call forth that good in whatever shape and form we desire.

You know, most of the time when we think about *"What's blocking my good?"* and *"What's getting in my way?"* we'll think: the thing that happened in my childhood ... or my low self-esteem ... or my abandonment issues ... or lack of education ... or the bad investment I made ... or my parents. We've got all kinds of things that we think are blocking our good; that's stopping us from being happy or successful.

And the truth is: the worst thing we could do – and the thing we do the most that harms our own happiness and success -- you know what it is? By not praying, and not praying consistently, and using the incredible power of prayer that we have within us, available to us 24/7. It is stunning how we deprive and rob ourselves of joy, of happiness and prosperity by not turning to the most powerful energy and vibration we can create ... which is to unify our hearts and minds with the very Source and Intelligence that created the sun and the stars and the oceans that made every cell of our being.

That's fully available, and yet we don't always use it. We would turn to complain to our friend or whoever cuts our hair or go to a Tony Robbins thing for \$3,000. I mean, it's amazing! I find it amazing! We don't turn to prayer! It's free! It's available; fully accessible!

You know, I think maybe it's too easy. It's too available. I think we should charge charging people for praying! [Congregants laugh] You remember when water used to be free? Now they put in a bottle and they charge you for it. Maybe then we'll take it seriously -- to realize, *"Wow; this prayer thing's pretty powerful."* The greatest resource you have in your life -- or any situation going on -- is to pray: to turn to that creative Intelligence and open your heart and your mind to the truth that's in you, and to allow it to flow through.

I would say to you without question, the single greatest thing you can do for yourself -- and we can all do for ourselves -- is to develop a personal prayer practice. A committed personal prayer practice.

How many people have a personal prayer practice? How many people know you could probably kick it up a notch and be more effective and better in your prayer life?

So, this morning, I want to look at four ways we can improve our prayer practice, take it deeper and be more effective in the way we pray ... and utilize this great gift and power of prayer that we all have access to.

The first one is to pray with intention. We always hear about the power of intention. Intention is just not a wish or a thought. Intention really represents a point of focus that is clear, and it directs our creative energies towards some desired outcome.

Intention is the starting point of every goal or dream fulfilled. So why not use the power of intention for our spiritual life and for our prayer practice?

The Apostle Paul kind of named what our prayer intention is when he said, *"Let the same mind that was in Christ Jesus be in you."* That's what our intention is when we pray -- is to develop the Christ consciousness; to know our oneness with God.

You could also say it like this: to achieve self-realization. You could say it's to achieve enlightenment. You could say that it's to fulfill our divine potential.

But can you feel the difference of having that intention for when we pray? How powerful and directive and creative that could be?

Our intention, as Phil Moore said, is our effort to know God. It is our effort to know God. And so are you willing to put an intention on your prayer and to focus that intention on your oneness with the Spirit within you?

Okay, **the second thing is to pray sincerely.** In the Book of Jeremiah, Chapter 29, Verse 13, it says, *"If you seek me, you will find me, if you seek me with all your heart."* And this is saying: the only requirement you really need to know God at a deeper level is to be sincere; to have a desire for God with all your heart.

The greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. In Psalms it says, *"As a man thinketh in his heart ..."* There's a clear thing of this heart idea and concept, and it really is about sincerity. The more sincere, the clearer that energy is that we put out, the more powerful it is as an attracting force.

in Matthew, when Jesus said, *"Seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you,"* it's saying that, when you seek God first as a priority and seek sincerely, you open the flow to the abundance and goodness of God. That, when that's your priority, that things will just begin to fall into place and open up for you. But you've got to pray sincerely.

And then the next one is to pray with joy. You know, sometimes I don't know if we considered prayer a joyful experience. Like, I have this friend and she said to me, *"I get up and I pray first thing in the morning so I can just get it over with."* [Congregants laugh] Doesn't sound so joyful to me!

I think we treat prayer like exercise and eating broccoli. [Congregants laugh] We don't really want to do it, but we kind of do it to get over with, because we know it's good for us.

Scripture says, *"Make a joyful noise until the Lord."* It says, *"In your presence is the fullness of joy."* *"Enter God's presence with gladness."* *"Enter into the joy of the Lord."* My favorite is from Psalms 37, Verse 4, when it says, *"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."*

When was the last time you delighted yourself in God? When was the last time you got excited to pray? When was the last time you smiled when you prayed? Don't you think it should be a joyful experience when we're unifying our minds with the Power and the Intelligence that created all and makes everything possible? That Power and that Energy that created us, loves us and wants the best for us? Always wants to express the best through us? That we need to pray with joy. It is a joyful experience!

So, something I want to mention is that, in Unity, we teach that God is within you. God is not a person. You know, we teach that God is not outside of you, and we teach that God is not male. But the Bible is extremely anthropomorphic. And so, you know, this idea of God being a male -- even Jesus saying, *"The Father and I are one"; "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."* And it says God will give you ..

We can't help but hear some of these anthropomorphic messages -- and particularly male messages of God, and sometimes that doesn't bring people joy. The 1930s and '40s theologian Paul Tillich said that we should get rid of the word or find a different substitute for the word "God," because the word has been used in a way that has threatened and punished people ... and they don't have warm and fuzzies over hearing "God." It doesn't bring them joy hearing about a male anthropomorphic God. How many people have some negative energies around God and the whole male anthropomorphic thing? Okay, great. Five. Good. Perfect. [Congregants laugh] As long as we're above one, I'm feeling happy! And so ...

But I think it's an important thing that, if we want to use "Universe" or "Divine Presence" or "Spirit" or "Universal Intelligence" ... or whatever it is! Because you want to connect with it so that the activity of prayer is joyful. That you are able to open your heart and feel safe; to feel loved. And to feel happy and excited to engage in a deeper soul connection.

And then the last one I want to talk about that helps our prayers' efficacy is to practice prayer consistently. Sometimes we just pray whenever there's a need; when something's wrong and we're desperate or not feeling good. But it's important to pray more consistently.

I think consistency is a vital aspect of success, because the more consistent we are, it develops levels of discipline; it helps build momentum; and it shows that small, repeated actions create reliable, strong habits. And strong habits will always lead to greater success.

Jesus prayed four or five times a day consistently. Somebody once wrote that transformation is not a one-time event; it is an ongoing process supported by intentional spiritual practice. Prayer needs to be an intentional spiritual practice that is consistently done.

Jesus never had a really good prayer and tried to ride that bad boy for a week. [Congregants laugh] He did it consistently! I mean, it's like your diet. You eat consistently and regularly. Look at the structure and consistency in our lives that are important. With our diet and our eating -- that's pretty structured. With our work -- that's pretty structured. Family activities -- pretty structured. I mean, exercise -- pretty structured. So why would we not add -- to help our consistency with our prayer life and our intention in our prayer life -- why would we not add some more structure?

And so here's seven steps to structure your prayer life. This is just a little framework, and this would be about 15 minutes. But I'll give you a minute-by-minute of what is effective. It's just a suggestion, but I think it could be helpful to all of us.

- 1) So, for the first two minutes, you would ... it's just **grounding and centering**: taking a few deep breaths, and just relaxing. And the cool thing about that is that: it's really a good a good help that you focus on -- when you exhale to relax even more. So you breathe in and, when you exhale, you really relax. You breathe in; exhale -- you really let go. Breathe in; exhale -- you really surrender and open your heart to God. So just kind of surrendering and grounding.
- 2) The second one is then **turn to gratitude**. To fill your heart with gratitude for all the good that's in your life. And you could be grateful for anything! Grateful for your family; grateful for your pet; grateful for your friends, grateful for the sunsets; grateful for laughter; grateful for the smell of coffee. It could be whatever it is that fills your heart with gratitude.
- 3) And then the third one is to **release**. Have a little release session. Say, *"What am I holding onto that I need to let go? What is the time for me to give it over to God and free myself from the weight of that?"*
- 4) Then the fourth one is to **call forth your good**. Get clear about what it is you want. And maybe it's clarity; maybe it's healing; maybe it's courage; maybe it's prosperity or a job. Whatever it is, claim it. State it; affirm it; accept it; and feel worthy of it.
- 5) And then the fifth one is **pray for someone else**. In the course of your prayer life, every day you should pray for somebody. Send out love to someone else. Send out blessings to someone else. It will do them good, it will do you good, and it'll do us all good. Add someone else. I mean, just like it says, look out for your own interest; that's great. But also look out for the interest of others. That's how we unify and uplift ourselves.
- 6) And then number six is just listen. **Be still**. Sometimes we're so busy thinking, so busy talking, so busy doing that sometimes that silence gives us the opportunity to be open and available and receptive to the guidance and the inspiration and the wisdom of Spirit.
- 7) And the last one is to **commit or recommit yourself to be a channel** of love or an instrument of peace. Commit yourself to live a God-centered life; recommit! Every time you pray, end that prayer by recommitting to put God first in your life.

Like most of what we grew up thinking: *"You know, if I just pray hard enough; if I just pray long enough, I know I can convince God and the Universe to open up and make things go my way."* And we think, at some level, if we just pray a certain way, it'll change God. It'll change the outer.

And the truth: that's not it at all. Unity teaches the only thing that prayer changes is us. That it calms and centers us. It opens and aligns us. It unifies us with the all-providing presence of Spirit that is always around: in us and all around us.

There's an old Unity joke that says, *"If you feel distant from God, who moved?"* [Congregants laugh] God did not move!

I heard somebody say that prayer is like the world's best Wi-Fi. It's free. It's unlimited. It's available everywhere. But if you're having a hard time connecting, maybe you need to move closer to the router. [Congregants laugh] And that means open your heart. It's a prayer; open your heart to feel a greater connection.

Johnnie Coleman, a Unity minister from long, long ago -- she used to say, *"It works if you work it."*
Prayer's there; it's available 24/7. It's the most powerful energy you can engage in, because you're tapping into the Source that makes all possible!

The question is: Are you willing to work it? It works if you work it.

A man prays and he says, *"Dear God, so far I've done all right. I haven't gossiped; I haven't lost my temper; I haven't been greedy or grumpy, nasty, selfish or overindulgent; and I'm really glad about that. But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed, and for the rest of the day, I'm going to need your help."* [Congregants laugh] And so ... [Laughs]

So, what I think the message in this song is saying is that. for any and everything in your life that isn't working well -- or you would like to work well, or even greater -- the answer is: prayer. That if you're struggling or if you're lost; if you're in conflict; if you're working towards a dream; or if you want to improve your hearing or your hearing [congregants laugh], the answer is: we pray. That if we want a better life -- you want to experience more joy; you want more meaning; and you want more healing -- the answer is: we pray. If you want to fulfill your divine potential; if you want to be your best self; and live your best life, the best thing we can do -- the best thing for us -- is for us to pray. To pray. To pray! God bless you all.