

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
ELKHORN, NEBRASKA  
NOVEMBER 20, 2005  
PASTOR WENDA FRY

1 PASTOR WENDA FRY: We have been talking about the  
2 Father's house. We have been talking about the great house  
3 of God.

4 The last three weeks we have been learning some new  
5 things about the Lord's prayer, and that's one of the things  
6 we have been talking about, is when we pray the Lord's  
7 prayer with the words, and more importantly with our lives,  
8 it's like wandering around the great house of God.

9 In the living room, it's the living room of God's  
10 love, and here is where we crawl up into abba, poppa,  
11 poppa's lap, our dad in heaven.

12 That's what our Father in heaven means. Abba.  
13 He's our father.

14 We're part of his family. He has adopted each and  
15 every one of us.

16 We are sons and daughters of the King and he wants  
17 to provide for our every need and he wants us to come into  
18 the living room of his love and receive the comfort there  
19 and sit and he'll listen to us when he crawl up into his  
20 great lap.

21 Then when we pray the second and third petitions,  
22 give us this day our daily bread, it's like pulling up a  
23 chair in God's kitchen, and pulling up a chair at his  
24 abundant table where he just wants to ladle us with the  
25 things we need every day, and ladle us, pour out his love

1 and forgiveness so that we can forgive those who have hurt  
2 us or trespassed against us. That's what happens at God's  
3 abundant table.

4 When we pray the Lord's prayer, we don't pray to my  
5 Father in heaven. We don't pray forgive my sins. We don't  
6 ask God to forgive my debt. We don't talk about my debtors.

7 We pray give us this day our daily bread. Lead us  
8 not into temptation. Deliver us from evil.

9 There are no first person pronouns in the Lord's  
10 prayer. They are all in the third person.

11 So when we pray give us this day our daily bread,  
12 we say our abba, our dad, and lead us, and deliver us, and  
13 forgive us our trespasses, we are being escorted by those  
14 third person plural pronouns into the family room.

15 It's the most colorful room in the house. Maybe it  
16 is in your family, in your house as well.

17 The family room is the most challenging room in the  
18 house, however.

19 Because, see, this is where people interact. This  
20 is where God's people interact.

21 When you play a game, you do it with other people.  
22 When you want to have a fire, you come into the family room,  
23 when you want to have a fire you say somebody go get the  
24 papers, somebody go get the twigs, someone get the logs,  
25 there is interaction in the family room.

1           And that's why it's the most challenging room in  
2 the house, because when we interact with other people, then  
3 there is potential for conflict and misunderstanding, and  
4 that's why it's the most challenging room in the house.

5           The other reason it's the most challenging room in  
6 the house is because we are not the only ones in the family  
7 room in the great house of God.

8           There are a lot of other people in the family room,  
9 which again makes it challenging.

10           In Ephesians, chapter one, I'm going to read from  
11 the Message Bible.

12           When we pray the first two petitions of the Lord's  
13 prayer we're talking about God's character, how much he  
14 wants to be our dad, and that in the kingdom God wants to  
15 give us everything.

16           Remember when Pastor Mark, those of you who were  
17 here a couple weeks ago, when he really challenged us when  
18 we pray thy will be done, when we are praying about healing,  
19 or wholeness, and he said sometimes when we pray we back  
20 right out of it and say if it is your will.

21           And he reminded us that it is God's will for us to  
22 be whole, for us to be healed, for us to have joy in our  
23 family relationships, so he reminded us of that.

24           And then with give us this day our daily bread, and  
25 forgive us our trespasses, we gather in the kitchen.

1           Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us as  
2 we forgive.

3           In the kitchen we realize that God wants to  
4 provide. We don't pray give us this day our month's supply  
5 or our week's supply.

6           That's really key, because, again, it throws us  
7 back to our dad in heaven, because God wants us to talk to  
8 him daily about what we need.

9           So that's what is awesome about that petition and  
10 then he also will provide for us. He'll give us the  
11 forgiveness and the strength that we need to forgive other  
12 people.

13           Last week we each went out of here really  
14 challenged with that forgiveness thing, didn't we?

15           It's hard, because we looked really hard and  
16 carefully at that scripture that says if you don't forgive,  
17 God says, I won't forgive you.

18           And that was hard to hear, so that brought us to  
19 our knees and to our prayer chairs and we said, "Lord, show  
20 me who I am not forgiving." We were challenged last week.

21           But in the family room we have an even greater  
22 challenge, I believe.

23           It's part of that challenge, of course, that we  
24 talked about with forgiveness and forgiving one another.

25           But in the family room, there are a lot of people

1 in there, and I want to share from Ephesians 1.

2 "Long before He laid down earth's foundations he  
3 had us in mind. He had settled on us as the focus of his  
4 love. Long ago God decided to adopt us into his family  
5 through Jesus Christ. He had his eye on us, had designs on  
6 us, for glorious living, part of the overall purpose, his  
7 working out in every one and everything."

8 See, long, long ago God had diversity in the family  
9 in mind, and that's the challenge.

10 Because when there is diversity, then there is  
11 misunderstanding and potential conflict and it's a  
12 challenge.

13 Max Lucado, some of you know and have read some of  
14 his books, he has a description of the family of God, the  
15 diversity, it's kind of a little poem.

16 "We are olive-skinned, curly-haired, blue-eyed, and  
17 black. We come from boarding schools, and ghettos, mansions  
18 and shacks. We wear turbans, we wear robes, we like  
19 tamales, we eat rice. We have convictions and opinions, and  
20 to agree would be nice, but we don't. Still we try, and  
21 this much we know. It's better inside with each other, than  
22 outside living alone."

23 That's so true, see, because long, long ago in the  
24 very beginning, when God ordered beauty out of the chaos,  
25 when he created, he looked around on the sixth day and there

1 was Adam, and there was creation, and there were the  
2 animals, and there were the bugs and there were all the  
3 beautiful flowers, but God said something is not right.  
4 It's not good that Adam is alone.

5 So from the very beginning, this is what the writer  
6 of Ephesians means, long ago God had us in mind. He had the  
7 focus of his love on us.

8 God had diversity in the family in mind, because we  
9 were created with a connection requirement. We were created  
10 to not be alone.

11 I'm reading a book, "Blue Like Jazz". Pastor Mark  
12 finished it a little while ago, it's a great book about the  
13 relevance of the Christian faith today.

14 And I have three pages left and I'm refusing to  
15 finish it because it's so good. Have you ever done that  
16 with a book?

17 But in this book, the author is a very candid  
18 writer, and he has a chapter called "Alone".

19 He's a single guy and he's fallen in love several  
20 times, and he says that he really likes being in love  
21 because then he doesn't have to think about himself; he  
22 thinks completely about the beloved.

23 He finds himself sleeping and eating and making up  
24 poems for her and he's totally taken by that, but then he  
25 comes to this conclusion.

1           "I no longer think that being in love is the polar  
2 opposite of being alone. I say that because I used to want  
3 to be in love again, as I assumed this was the opposite of  
4 loneliness. I think being in love is an opposite of  
5 loneliness, but not the opposite. There are other things I  
6 now crave when I'm lonely, like community, like friendship,  
7 like family. I think our society puts too much pressure on  
8 romantic love and that's why so many romances fail. Romance  
9 can't possibly carry all that we want it to. Other people  
10 keep our souls alive, just like food and water does with our  
11 body."

12           It's a great book. I really encourage you to read  
13 it, because he comes in contact with some simple but very  
14 profound thoughts. That's a great thought.

15           I think he's right about that in terms of romance.  
16 Because we put all of our eggs in that basket, our society  
17 teaches us to do that, and it's just an opposite of being  
18 alone. It's just one opposite.

19           Friendship. Family. Community. We were created  
20 to be a community.

21           We were created to share our lives, to live life  
22 together deeply, with those around us.

23           That's why the family room is the most challenging  
24 room in the house, because there's diversity and it's not  
25 good for us to be alone.

1           That's why we are taught to pray, lead us not into  
2 temptation and deliver us from evil.

3           Now, I don't know about you, but I have been  
4 praying that prayer for quite a while and many times when I  
5 pray that part of the Lord's prayer I think to myself the  
6 things that I'm tempted to do or not do.

7           I personalize it. I tend to think about people  
8 that are in my life that could cause me to go astray from my  
9 marriage covenant, or my family covenant, or my covenant  
10 with God, or my covenant with you as a pastor.

11           I tend to personalize it, but that's why Jesus  
12 teaches us to pray this part of the Lord's prayer, because  
13 it's us.

14           Lead us not into temptation, and if you think about  
15 it, it's in our relationships with one another where we are  
16 really tempted to stray from the covenant, if you think  
17 about it.

18           It's in the family. It's in the marriage. It's in  
19 a place like Bethany where we are in relationship with one  
20 another, that's really where the enemy tries to get in,  
21 especially as I said earlier, get in and steal our joy, and  
22 try to talk us out of, you don't really think that they love  
23 you like that, do you?

24           And that's why I think Jesus says pray this way.  
25 Not lead me out of temptation, but lead us out of

1 temptation, because the world tempts us to live a different  
2 way than what God lays out for us in his holy word.

3 So we pray lead us not into temptation, but deliver  
4 us from evil.

5 In that part of the Lord's prayer what we are  
6 really praying for, it's not really so much about temptation  
7 and evil as it is about guidance and protection.

8 Now, for adults, maybe they ponder that, why would  
9 we pray lead us not into temptation and deliver us from  
10 evil.

11 Would God tempts us? Would God put us into a path  
12 of evil? Would God do that? Is that the kind of God we  
13 worship?

14 The answer is no. The Bible is clear about that.  
15 James 1:13 says God tempts no one, but we learned in the  
16 scripture that I read earlier from 1 Peter 5 that suffering  
17 is just going to happen.

18 Our hearts are going to ache this side of eternity.  
19 There is going to be heartache, there's going to be  
20 suffering, there is going to be pain.

21 But God doesn't willingly afflict or grieve his  
22 children.

23 There is a sound clip I want to play. This is a  
24 song by Steven Curtis Chapman.

25 I think that adults may struggle with this part of

1 the Lord's prayer, but children don't.

2 A person with a child-like heart knows that God  
3 will provide for their daily needs; knows that God will  
4 forgive them.

5 They trust that. They don't keep holding on to the  
6 grudge or the failure.

7 That same child-like heart will easily ask God to  
8 protect and guide, like taking the hand of a father or  
9 parent and walking across the street when it's dangerous,  
10 that kind of child-like trust.

11 "I would lay me down to sleep  
12 Pray the Lord my soul to keep  
13 Though I never saw him there  
14 I believe he heard each prayer  
15 For God was great  
16 And God was good  
17 And I knew if I spoke the words  
18 He would be listening  
19 But you can take a song away  
20 From the simple child-like prayer  
21 But I am longing to return  
22 To the place where I first learned  
23 That God is great  
24 That God is good"

25

1           That child-like faith. That's the one that prays  
2           lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from evil, the  
3           one that counts on God to protect.

4           Psalm 37 says it this way. "Our God wants to  
5           provide that hand. Our steps are made sure by the Lord.  
6           Though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong, for the Lord  
7           holds us by the hand."

8           See, it's the prayer of a child. We often turn  
9           that part of the Lord's prayer into this thing about  
10          darkness and temptation.

11          But it's really about protection and guidance, and  
12          it's really saying I trust that you want to hold my hand  
13          every day, God. It's the prayer of a child.

14          Last week we went to the grocery store to get a  
15          little different picture about what it was like to pray that  
16          part of the prayer, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive  
17          those who trespass against us. Remember?

18          We went to the grocery store and I just wanted to  
19          give you a new picture about what that would look like; what  
20          you buy for yourself is what you should buy for your  
21          neighbor.

22          Instead of buying your neighbor moldy bread, or  
23          cheap orange juice, you ought to buy your neighbor some  
24          great Minute Maid with medium pulp, and that winter wheat  
25          bread that is so delicious and nutty.

1           What you give is what you will receive, is what the  
2 scripture teaches, and then says forgive as we have been  
3 forgiven.

4           This week I want to give you a different picture  
5 about this petition, lead us not into temptation and deliver  
6 us from evil.

7           So we are going to go into the family room, and we  
8 are going to call a family meeting. Remember those?

9           Go ahead and roll your eyes with me. Roll your  
10 eyes about the family meeting.

11           That's what our kids did whenever we called a  
12 family meeting.

13           Now the reason we would call a family meeting is  
14 because one or two of us strayed from one of our family  
15 values, which could be respect, or love, or prayer.

16           And so the kids would roll their eyes because they  
17 knew that we were going to hold them accountable for the  
18 fact that they had strayed from one of the family values,  
19 which is that you don't leave your wet towel on the bathroom  
20 floor, right?

21           You don't leave your dishes in the sink, because  
22 the next family member, community member, then can't get in  
23 and do what they need to do, right?

24           So when you call a family meeting, you call it so  
25 that you can hold one another accountable.

1           We decided after a while, because the kids really  
2 started rolling their eyes on this, we decided to mix it up  
3 a bit and call a family meeting for another reason. For  
4 encouragement.

5           So we would call a family meeting, they would roll  
6 their eyes, we would all sit down in the family room and  
7 say, "What is going on, you guys?"

8           The kids would look at each other like what is  
9 this? What is happening?

10           We would say, "What are you afraid about? We want  
11 to give everyone a chance to talk so that we can hear what  
12 we need to be praying about, because we love and respect  
13 each other."

14           So we began to call family meetings for those two  
15 different reasons and after a while the kids didn't know  
16 whether to roll their eyes or not, because they didn't know  
17 whether it was going to be for accountability or for  
18 encouragement.

19           That's what family meetings are about;  
20 accountability and encouragement.

21           When we come into the family room of God, that's  
22 what happens there as well. It's about accountability and  
23 encouragement.

24           Last week we had a family meeting here at Bethany.  
25 It was in the chapel and you were represented.

1           There was someone from every age group, from teens,  
2           20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and into their 70s. They  
3           represented the Bethany family.

4           And the meeting was the annual meeting, not all of  
5           you could make it, so I want to tell you about it.

6           It was the first time in my eighteen years of  
7           ministry at Bethany that the annual meeting actually felt  
8           like a family meeting.

9           It was really cool. The values of respect; the  
10          values of love; the values of faith were uplifted, and  
11          people were respectful of other family members when they  
12          talked, like it was when we got into family meetings in our  
13          home, and hopefully the same way that you do in your family  
14          meetings.

15          But you hold a family meeting for accountability  
16          and encouragement. Those are the two reasons.

17          You all received a letter about our financial  
18          situation here at Bethany and that really turned out to be  
19          the subject of the family meeting.

20          We were reminded that 77 percent of the people who  
21          come to Bethany on a weekly basis give zero to \$25 a week.

22          77 percent of the Bethany family that comes on a  
23          weekly basis gives less than \$25 a week.

24          The average of that would be \$7 and that would not  
25          even probably pay for thirty minutes in this room with these

1 lights or our heating billing.

2           And then we heard statistics like this summer in  
3 August we paid \$4700 for air conditioning, and I'm glad we  
4 were able to do that, because we had the largest wedding in  
5 Bethany's history, ten attendants on both sides, and they  
6 were comfortable in here.

7           But think if we wouldn't have been able to pay that  
8 bill, \$4700 for air conditioning alone, for the ten  
9 attendants.

10           We want people to be comfortable, because we want  
11 them to come into this place, in the cool of God's love or  
12 the warmth of God's love.

13           We were reminded of that startling statistic, and  
14 then we were reminded that some of the people in the Bethany  
15 family that have promised to do something, promised to give  
16 gifts to God, aren't making good on their promises.

17           That's why you call family meetings, is to hold  
18 people accountable and to encourage each other.

19           Then we were reminded by someone else that some  
20 people have given their promise, but they have forgotten  
21 that it ought to be a floor, not a ceiling, in the Father's  
22 house.

23           It's a floor gift, not a ceiling gift, in the  
24 Father's house.

25           And so we were respectful of each other and we

1 listened to each other.

2 And then we all said, "What do we do?"

3 Pastor Mark and the church council leadership are  
4 meeting today to decide what we are going to do.

5 But the challenge that Pastor Mark gave us, I  
6 thought, was a good one.

7 He said talk to the other family members. All of  
8 you talk to the other family members that you go to dinner  
9 with, or that you study the Bible with, or that you live in  
10 the neighborhood with, and hold them accountable and  
11 encourage them, ask them, have you made good on your  
12 promises?

13 They don't have to share the details, but did you  
14 promise something? Will you make good on it?

15 Because it's the other family members in the family  
16 room and that's why it's so challenging, because some of us  
17 aren't pulling our fair share.

18 We're leaving wet towels on the bathroom floor, or  
19 leaving a sink full of dirty dishes, and there are people  
20 that God wants to come into this great house, this great  
21 family room.

22 They are not even here yet, but they're not going  
23 to be able to get in if our wets towels are everywhere, and  
24 if each of us are not going to God and being accountable for  
25 the promises we made to God, not to us, not to Bethany, not

1 to this building, to God.

2 So if you are upset about something in the  
3 ministry, and you are withholding your funds because of  
4 that, you are not withholding them against me, or Pastor  
5 Mark, or your friends in the pew; you are withholding them  
6 against God. This is God's great house.

7 That's why the family room is so challenging. Lead  
8 us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

9 The world wants us to have a bunch of stuff.  
10 That's what is so great about the Lord's prayer.

11 It reminds us that dad, our dad in heaven, is our  
12 dad, and we are brothers and sisters, and we need to hold  
13 each other accountable and encourage each other in the  
14 faith.

15 Lead us not into temptation. Deliver us from  
16 gossip.

17 Deliver us from talking about the things in the  
18 Bethany family that we need to go right to the source about.

19 Because the world teaches us different, and we are  
20 called to look different and to be different in the great  
21 family room of our great God.

22 Now, having said that, no family room is complete  
23 without a fireplace, I think.

24 Isn't that what really kindles our hearts and melts  
25 away some of the sadness we have and melts away some of the

1 grudges that we hold with one another.

2           So today as we conclude our three week series on  
3 the Lord's prayer our children actually are actually going  
4 to kindle the fire.

5           As you can see, we don't have a fire going up here,  
6 so we, the people of God, are going to become the fire as we  
7 celebrate our knowledge of the Lord's prayer.

8           The fact that our God is great, he's our dad, he  
9 wants us to talk to him every day.

10           And he wants us to live not as the world lives, but  
11 to live as the people of God.

12           Thank for you Blast-Off for coming in today to help  
13 us conclude our series on the Lord's prayer.

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25