

Session 1: Lessons from Augustine's Prayer Life

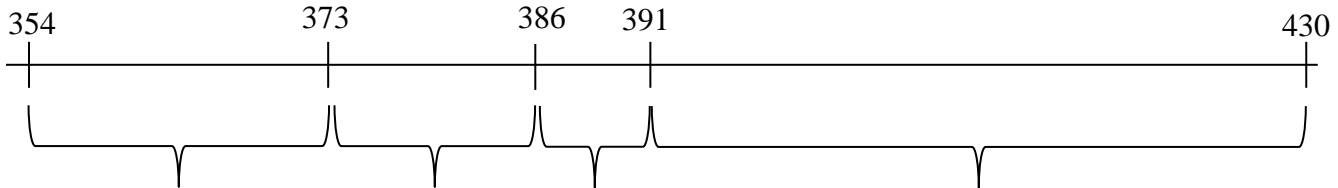
Six Men and Their Prayer Lives – Monday Night Bible Study 2025

Michael Garreau



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I. Synopsis of Augustine's Life



II. Augustine's Teaching on Prayer

A. _____ *can only be found in God.*

1. Every person desires to be _____.

a) *"To aim at the happy life, to wish for the happy life, to covet the happy life, to seek it and follow after it, is, I think, the business of all men"* (Sermon 150.4).

2. Not everyone agrees _____ to find happiness.

a) *"But to know where to find this thing desired of all; that is disputed among men, that divides them"* (Sermon 150.4).

3. So what is the only true _____ that can satisfy people's longing?

a) *"You have formed us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in you"* (Conf. 1.1.1).

4. It follows then, that if one is to experience true happiness, he must pursue _____.

a) *"Following after God is the desire of happiness; to reach God is happiness itself"* (MCC 11.18).

B. *Prayer is the heart's _____ for God.*

1. Prayer plays an important role in our pursuit of God. It is the _____ by which we express our desire for God.

a) *"In order to our obtaining this true blessed life, He who is Himself the True Blessed Life has taught us to pray"* (Letter 130.15).

b) *"Longing desire always prays, though the tongue is silent. If you are ever longing, you are ever praying. When does prayer sleep? When desire grows cold"* (Sermon XXX.7).

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2. It is the “voice” of one’s heart desire that God _____.

- a) *“He who prays with desire sings in his heart, even though his tongue is silent. But if he prays without desire he is dumb before God, even though his voice sounds in the ears of men” (On Psalm 86.1).*
- b) *“As the ears of men are attentive to your lips, so are the ears of God inclined to your heart. How many there are whose lips are silent, but whose love is eloquent. So many are heard though their lips do not move, and many are left unanswered in spite of their noisy clamor. We ought to pray, then, with our affections” (On Psalm 119.9).*

3. This explains the Bible’s seemingly _____ teaching on prayer.

- a) *“When we cherish uninterrupted desire along with the exercise of faith and hope and charity, we “pray always...And therefore, what else is intended by the words of the apostle: “Pray without ceasing,” than, “Desire without intermission, from Him who alone can give it, a happy life, which no life can be but that which is eternal?” (Letter 130.18).*
- b) *“For to spend a long time in prayer is not, as some think, the same thing as to pray “with much speaking.” Multiplied words are one thing, long-continued warmth of desire is another” (Letter 130.19).*

C. **We do not pray [with words] in order to inform God, but rather to _____ our heart’s desire towards him that we might be ready to receive what he is prepared to give.**

1. *“Seeing then that our Father knows already what is needful for us, how and why do we ask? why seek? why knock? why weary ourselves in asking, and seeking, and knocking, to instruct Him who knows already? ...For He would that men should knock at Him, not that He might repel those that knock, but that He might _____ those who long” (Sermon XXX).*
2. *“God requires us to ask not that thereby our wish may be intimated to Him, for to Him it cannot be unknown, but in order that by prayer there may be exercised in us by supplications that desire by which we may receive what He prepares to bestow. His gifts are very great, but we are small and straitened in our capacity of receiving” (Letter 130.17).*
3. *“Through prayer, therefore, it is brought about that the heart is _____ Him who is always ready to give, provided we are ready to accept whatever He may give” (Sermon on the Mount 2.3.14).*

D. **God is more willing to _____ than we are to _____.**

1. *“But our Lord Jesus Christ, who is in the midst of us a Petitioner, with God a Giver, would not surely exhort us so strongly to ask, if He were not willing to give. Let then the slothfulness of men be put to shame; He is more willing to give, than*

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we to receive; He is more willing to show mercy, than we to be delivered from misery” (Sermon LV).

2. **Regarding the parable of the widow and the unjust judge:** *“If he then heard her prayer, who hated to be asked, how must He hear who exhorts us to ask?” (Sermon LXV).*

3. **Regarding the parable of the man who wakes his neighbor to ask for bread:** *“The Lord would have us understand that, if even one who was asleep is constrained to give, even in spite of himself, after being disturbed in his sleep by the person who asks of him, how much more kindly will He give who never sleeps, and who rouses us from sleep that we may ask from Him” (Letter 130:15).*

E. **We should pray for God Himself as the _____ of our desire.**

1. *“If God came to you without gold and silver would you have nothing to do with him? Of all those things that God has made, what is sufficient for you if God does not suffice you? ...Many cry to the Lord to avoid losses or to acquire riches, for the safety of their friends or the security of their homes, for temporal felicity or worldly distinction, yes, even for mere physical health which is the sole inheritance of the poor man. For such things many cry to the Lord, but scarcely one for the sake of the Lord himself. Alas, it is easy to want things from God and not want God himself, as though the gift could ever be preferable to the giver” (On Ps. 30.3.4).*

2. *“What then should you pray for? Why, surely, what the Lord, your heavenly teacher, has taught you to pray for. Call upon God as God, love God as God. There is nothing preferable to him; desire him, yearn after him. Listen to the Psalmist who...calls upon God and says: One thing I ask of the Lord; this I seek (Ps. 26:4). And what is it that he asks of the Lord? To dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, that I may gaze on the loveliness of the Lord (Ps. 27:4). If, then, you would really be the Lord's lover, choose him from your inmost heart, yearn for him with holy desire, love him, be all aglow with him, look eagerly for him, because you will find nothing more delightful, nothing that can fill you with more joy, nothing better, nothing more lasting. What could be more lasting than he who is everlasting?” (On Ps. 85.8).*

3. *“The heart is right with _____ when it seeks _____ for the sake of _____” (On Psalm 77.21).*

F. **In temporal matters, _____, but trust God to give what is _____.**

1. **Asking for temporal goods must always be _____ to the pursuit of God himself.**

a) *“There are then two kinds of blessings, temporal and eternal. ...For those good things [eternal blessings] do profit him that has them, they*

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cannot harm him. But those other temporal good things sometimes profit, and sometimes harm. Poverty hath profited many, and wealth has harmed many; a private life has profited many, and exalted honor has harmed many. And again, money has profited some, honorable distinction has profited some; profited them who use them well; but from those who use them ill, not withdrawing them has harmed them more. And so, Brethren, let us ask for those temporal blessings too, but in moderation, being sure that if we do receive them, He gives them, who knows what is expedient for us. You have asked, and what you have asked, has not been given you? Trust your Father, who would give it to you, were it expedient for you” (Sermon XXX.7).

2. In temporal matters, we should never be disappointed or _____ if we do not receive what we ask.

a) *“For other hope have we none amid the manifold evils of this present world, than to knock in prayer, to believe and to maintain the belief firm in the heart, that your Father only does not give you what He knows is not beneficial for you. For you know what you desire; He knows what is good for you” (Sermon XXX).*

3. Augustine exemplifies this perspective in a letter he writes to a friend,

a) *“As for my spirit, I am well, through the Lord’s good pleasure, and the strength which He condescends to impart; but as for my body, I am confined to bed. I can neither walk, nor stand, nor sit, because of the pain and swelling of a boil or tumor. But even in such a case, since this is the will of the Lord, what else can I say than that I am well? For if we do not wish that which He is pleased to do, we ought rather to take blame to ourselves than to think that He could err in anything which He either does or suffers to be done” (Letter 38.1).*