

00:01 back. This is video two for session five of the Exploring Theology course, where we're looking at the question, how do we worship and pray?

00:12 the way I'm going to start with this, how do we worship and pray, I'm going to flip it around and we're going to start with how do we pray, partly with Evagrius of Pontus, Ponticus in mind.

00:22 So, moving on to the next slide, so, how do we pray? Now, one of the things to, to, to spell out, because I realize that the, the, the sentence, how do we worship and pray, or how do we pray in this instance, could, be sort of, you might be thinking that this is like a how-to, that

00:39 I'm now going to proceed to explain how to pray. No, that's not what we're doing. Remember, this is an Exploring Theology course, and so what we're going to be doing is exploring how do we pray, as in, the ways that we pray, and how that then impacts, understanding, and our theological reflections

00:57 and so on and so forth, and our, and our theology. Theological living. So, it's not a how-to manual kind of thing, it's a theological exploration of how do we pray, and how does that impact our theological thinking and living.

01:09 So, I want to begin by asking you the question, how do you pray? Okay, and, so, here are some things off the top of the head that I've been thinking about.

01:21 Do you pray out loud? do you, do you pray prayers that have been written down? do you, do you, do you, do you pray by yourself?

01:32 Do you pray with others? which do you prefer? do you pray in tongues, the spiritual gift of being given, to you to, to pray in this supernatural language?

01:45 Or, or do you prefer to pray in pray, in silence, as God called you to pray in silence, that that's the main way that you pray?

01:53 Do you pray in the morning? Do you pray in the evening? Do you pray during the day? do you pray long prayers?

02:03 Long, extemporaneous prayers? Do you pray short, arrow prayers? do you pray only in extremis? When everything else hasn't worked, you break the glass and you reach for the telephone, the prayer telephone, and you say, okay God, I think it's about time we had a chat, help.

02:22 do you pray for others? Do you pray for yourself? Do you pray for big things? Do you pray for small things?

02:34 Do you pray for palaces? Political events, grand national things that are happening across the globe? Do you pray for bust-ups in your family?

02:46 Do you pray for people, for their situations, those through the accidents of time and place that the Lord has brought you into contact with?

02:55 Do you, do you Do you pray for to say sorry? Do you fill your prayers with lots of words, and it all comes easy?

03:08 Are there times, though, when you pray and no words come? When you don't have words? When all you can do is sit still, and even that's hard?

03:20 Do you stop to listen in your prayers? To wait? To hear from God?

03:34 How do you address God when you pray? What words do you use?

03:47 When you speak to God? Now having said all that, it may be that you don't pray.

03:59 And that's totally fine. You're doing this course, you're exploring theology, but prayer is just something that you don't do, you don't get, you don't understand.

04:09 It's totally fine. In which case, if that's, if that's you, then I would invite you to think about those moments when you find having your, you, when you find that your life has its richest sense of connection, when you feel really connected in whatever way, think about those moments.

04:35 I'd like you to take about 15 minutes to think through some of those things that I've just been rattling off, different ways of praying, different aspects to praying, so on and so forth.

04:44 Just bring it back. It's very important that this is an honest reflection. Okay? You don't have to share everything or anything that you now proceed to jot down in your notebooks.

05:01 It's something for you, and out of that, when you are in your groups, to the degree that you feel comfortable, then you can share.

05:10 But this is very primarily just the first step in thinking through how we pray, and then we'll take it on from there.

05:19 So it's important for you, in your own theological reflection, to give this some due consideration. So, don't write down how you think you ought to pray.

05:28 Don't write a long list of how you... Be honest with yourselves. I'm going to be honest with myself. I'm going to write it down.

05:37 I'm going to be jotting away over these next 15 minutes. And, and then we'll, then we'll, we'll come back together.

05:46 And, and, and, one of the things to consider as you go along and you do this is, has how you pray changed over time?

05:58 Could be. It's very, very natural for there to be different phases and stages as Willie Nelson would sing. they're not about prayer.

06:08 has how you pray changed over time? so when you're thinking about how do you pray, also consider that, you know, it's totally fine in this reflection to just explore how that's changed if it has changed for you over time.

06:23 Okay, I'm going to turn the volume down so you don't hear any clattering around this I'll just have a little bit of sound maybe and hopefully I'll remember to turn the sound back up when, in about 15 minutes time and, then we'll take it from there.

06:35 to take more time as you jot down your thoughts and reflections and so on and so forth, that's absolutely fine.

21:57 Just pause the video, but, you know, that, that's, hopefully that's given you an opportunity to, to, to write a few things down and, consider how you pray.

22:09 How do you pray? And how, as I was saying, how, I, it's, it's, it, as your prayer changed over time, how, as how you pray changed over time, your prayer life and how, how has it changed over time?

22:22 Okay. I'm gonna, just get myself a glass of water cause I can feel my voice going a little bit gravelly.

22:31 And then, we'll continue, with this second video.

22:35 so there we go. I've got my glass of water. Let's carry on. So, we've been thinking about how we pray, and with Evagrius of Pontus in mind, let's bring up Evagrius' quote again.

22:49 So, if you're a theologian, you truly pray. If you truly pray, you're a theologian. And one of the interesting things about this is the way that it's almost as if you go in one direction, it's as if it then pivots and brings you back.

22:59 This relationship between praying and being a theologian, it's, it works in both kind of directions. It's going in one way and the other.

23:06 I want us to hold this in mind as I show you the next slide, because the next slide is a phrase in Latin, *lex orandi, lex credendi*.

23:15 For some reason in theology we end up using these little Latin phrases, but anyway, bear with. The *lex orandi* bit is saying, law of prayer, and then the *lex credendi* bit is saying, the law of belief.

23:30 And implicit in this is saying that the one affects the other, so the law of praying causes, shapes the law of belief.

23:40 Now, to put this in a less cumbersome kind of English translation, this is what we say, how we pray shapes what we believe.

23:48 *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. How we pray shapes what we believe. Now, this phrase, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, has been around, you know, it's, it's, it's a slightly shortened

version of the original phrase which was from a chap called Aquitaine of, Prosper of Aquitaine.

24:07 He was a 5th century layman who hung out with his with some monks in Marseilles, and he was really well known as a defender of, another key theologian, in, in the tradition, Augustine of Hippo.

24:23 you may have heard of, Augustine's, famous book, called His Confessions, because he was a bit of a scallywag, and, and, and it's the story of how he eventually came to be to faith.

24:35 really worth reading. If you've never come across, Augustine's Confessions, do check them out. there's a translation by Beninus O'Rourke, which is really good.

24:47 Anyway, we can talk about that when we meet in person for the final session, or I can just put a note of it in the, in the, extra resources for this, video.

24:59 For this, session five. Anyway, Lex or , Lex could , how we pray shapes, what we believe. And, yeah, so this goes back to, Prosper of Aquitaine and, and it's just, the law of belief is established by the law of prep type of thing.

25:16 So how we pray shapes what we believe. Lex or , Lex could , but notice there's this sort of comma after the or , Lex or .

25:34 And the thing is, is it as simple to say that how we pray shapes what we believe? Is it also the case of what we believe shapes how we pray?

25:47 It's not as if the traffic's all in one way. How we pray only determines what we believe. It's important to recognize that that absolutely does.

25:57 And that's our focus. But at the same time, how we believe, what we believe rather, also is going to shape how we pray.

26:11 Let's, you know, let's, let's, let's, let's consider, some, a question here. Okay? yeah. What changes because of prayer?

26:23 And what we think, you know, what we think, they're, is going to shape how we pray.

26:42 How we pray is going to shape what we believe. so there are all sorts of questions here that's going on.

26:48 So, for example, if you're praying for God to do something, there's a situation, and you're praying that God will do something, then you're praying, you're, you're, you're, that, that, that's, by doing that over and over again, you are, you're shaping your beliefs.

27:06 that, what you believe is that God is the g- the character of God is that God will do something, that God will, as it were, intervene.

27:16 will bring healing to somebody, or there's a situation at work which is just driving you bonkers and it's just, like, please Lord, you know, do something about this.

27:27 that says things about who God is. The fact that we pray that way says things about who God is.

27:34 and if we pray in that way, over and over daily, or weekly, or monthly, or however frequently we're praying, it's going to the understanding of this, Lex or .

27:49 Lex, Lex or , Lex Quilendy is going to say that it's going to shape what we actually believe about God.

27:55 And if we become. Because prayer isn't a private thing, isn't it? Is it? we, we, we pray as part of, tradition we've received a way of praying, we pray with others.

28:07 especially as part of the Church, we pray with others. And so, Umm. we are being shaped by how those around us have prayed, how those before us have prayed.

28:18 We received those prayers, those ways of praying, and implicit in them. Implicit in them is an understanding of who God is.

28:28 And the character of God. And, and, all that we then do when we're, praying, be it our prayers of adoration, our prayers of confession, our prayers of, of confession, our prayers of, gratitude, and all the different prayers that we bring to God.

28:50 All of them, as we pray them, they are, they carry with them, embedded within them, out of sight. Underground, as it were.

29:01 There's, there's a theological framing of who God is, and the character of God. It's, one of those key, this is why we talk about prayer, and we're gonna talk about worship, and a little bit, about prayer being a way of shaping us.

29:19 A shaping our understanding of who God is. Now, of course. It's not, as I say, just one-way traffic. What we believe is also going to share, shape, what we believe as well.

29:31 But, there are these big questions. So, it's like, what we believe shapes how we pray. What we pray shapes how we believe.

29:39 So, one of the things I want you to consider at this point is how you pray. When you're praying, say, for example, when you- come to your intercessions, and you're praying for specific things.

29:52 Say, situations and people and everything. What does that say about God? what's the implicit, understanding of God? What's the implicit theology that's under there?

30:04 What are you saying about the character of God when you pray for God in the way that you do? And, so go back to- to some of your notes that you made a moment ago about the different ways that you pray and so on and so forth, and unpack a little bit more over these sort of next five to ten minutes

30:22 of what does the way that you pray say about who God is? Yeah? There's a theology that's embedded in your prayers.

30:36 As to who God is. there may be the sort of the official theology as you are thinking, well, this is what I'm supposed to believe.

30:45 Blah, blah, blah. I'm more interested in us at this stage, diving into what is your understanding, what is your theology, what is my theology, that underpins these prayers that we say in our hearts out loud.

31:00 Whichever way it may be, that, that is, that, because we're doing this, in the way that we are, then shapes us.

31:10 It's shaping our, that, it's shaping our understanding of God. Well, we're not aware of it, but it's inside these prayers.

31:18 There's an understanding of God. So I just want to take some time. Take about ten minutes. This is not an easy- Question.

31:25 I totally recognise this, but just think about some of the prayers. Just, g-g-g-g-g, just narrow it down to something quite simple.

31:33 And when I pray like this, this says, this about God. And when I pray this, this says this about God.

31:45 Different things. Different types of prayers, different ways of praying. Different things. Things that we pray for difference, you know, that we praise in God.

31:52 What does that say about God if we're praising God in our prayers? If we're thanking God, what does that say about God when we thank God?

31:59 If we are asking God, in our intercessions, we're asking God to intercede, what does that say about God and God's relationship with- well, who God is, and also God's relationship.

32:10 That's but scratching his bells. He- He went to the vets the other day. He's not very impressed with us. The, he might come along and say hello at some point.

32:18 and, when we- when we're saying prayers of sorry to God, what does that say about our relationship with God and- and so on?

32:29 Do you get what I'm saying here? It's- when we pray, what does this say, theologically, about who God- is? What's our understanding?

32:38 What are- what are our beliefs from God that are embedded, are implicit in our prayers? So let's take ten minutes to do that.

32:46 I'm gonna- again, like you, I'm gonna jot down some of my thoughts and reflections about this. And these are some of the things that- to the degree that- to the degree that we're comfortable with, doing.

32:57 We'll bring and share when we meet, for our session when we're looking at this, topic from, session five.

33:05 So let's take about ten minutes. drop things down. I'll turn the volume down a little bit on the recording.

33:11 And, so I don't disturb you. And, yeah, what- so I've- I've given you an example question here on the screen.

33:17 What changes because of prayer? What does that imply about God? You- you don't- you don't have to go with that question.

33:21 You could go with some of the questions I was saying a moment ago about when we- all those kind of things that we do in our prayers when we ask God to intercede, when we thank God, and so on and so forth.

33:34 What does that say about who God is? What's the implicit? Right. I've said enough. I'm sure you've understood your thinking for goodness sake.

33:41 We'll stop talking. Let us just get on with it. So let's do it. And, ten minutes, yeah? Okay. Okay.

43:57 Let's draw. But, to a close, well, let's, well, draw it to a close as in. Pends down. It's the opportunity to stop.

44:09 I mean, you just could go on, couldn't we? so yes, it'll be interesting to see what- What has come to mind when you're thinking about this?

44:20 What does it say? about, what do your prayers implicitly say about your understanding of God?

44:35 it- it- such things reveal what we actually do. I mean, we may say one thing, but what we actually, what we actually believe.

44:38 is shown by, how we pray, in a very vulnerable, way, I think. And, in that sense, it shows the degree to which, if we're praying that way over and over, then it's sort of shaping what we believe about God.

45:00 And especially when we, have prayers, That are written to us from other, by others, or we've received. That starts to shape how we, how we pray, what we think about God, doesn't it?

45:10 And, and, because they're not our prayers, they're somebody else's prayers. And when we come into conversation, with other people as well, that also, shapes us, doesn't it?

45:19 and how their understandings then shape how we pray. So I want to take this moment in the sort of final section of this second video to, Introduce you to somebody who is, not a theologian, but he does think, theologically.

45:32 He's a musician, he's a pop singer, and, he lives just down the way in Brighton. his name is Nick Cave.

45:38 he hails from Australia. He was a bit of a punk rocker back in the, in the 80s and so on.

45:45 And, he, but he's, his musical, style has changed and evolved. All to the to the over the years.

45:51 and, as I say, he's, he moved to Brighton, to get into the music scene many, many, many years ago.

46:00 And, amongst some, his music, there are some beautiful, ballads, that he sings. And there's one that I want to, just spend a little bit of a time unpacking just the first part of it because it's, it's like a prayer.

46:14 but it's also a song which will, take us into the next section as well. So the, the, it's, it's called Into Your Arms.

46:23 The song is called Into Your Arms. It's from an album called The Boatman's Call. It's Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds.

46:30 If you, it's the first track on the album. If you, if you just Google it, it's on, there'll be recordings on YouTube.

46:39 And there'll be recordings on Spotify and so on and so forth, all that kind of stuff. So, yeah, Into Your Arms is the track.

46:48 And, so here we go. the first line. It's a very memorable first line. And I remember this is a, this is a ballad.

46:57 It's a, a love poem and it's a prayer. so here we go. So this is the first line and it's a, I don't, it begins.

47:07 I don't believe in an interventionist God. Okay, so he's saying, I don't believe in an interventionist God. An interventionist God.

47:16 An understanding of God is being an interventionist. God is a God who intervenes in our world. Who changes the course of events.

47:25 Who, he's saying, I don't believe, In a, in a God like that. I don't think God is like that.

47:30 I don't believe in an interventionist God. But the song continues, but I know, darling, that you do. So, the, the, the, the, the love that he is speaking to.

47:42 The, the woman that he loves. But I know, darling, that you do. I don't believe in an interventionist God, but I know, darling, that you do.

47:49 You can imagine they've had comp- I'll be right conversations, things back to what I was saying earlier about theology as a conversation.

47:55 You can imagine the sitting around a kitchen table or over a restaurant table talking about the different understandings of God.

48:01 Ah, you may believe in an interventionist God. I don't believe in an interventionist God. But I know, I know that you do.

48:06 He knows from those conversations. I know, darling, that you do. And from that conversation, that has started to change. How he prays.

48:16 And how he prays is beginning to change him. So he then goes on to sing. But if I did, if I did believe in an interventionist God, and so we have this hypothetical, but this hypothetical prayer that then follows, becomes a prayer.

48:32 A real prayer in the act of his singing. But if I did, I would kneel down and, Ask him. That act of kneeling down.

48:42 What does that say about who God is? And these lyrics I've taken from the Nick Cave website. So, you know, the capitalization of him is deliberate.

48:52 But if I did, if I did believe in an interventionist God, I would kneel down and ask him. Not to intervene.

49:02 8 . When it came to you. Not to touch a hair on your head. To leave you as you are. If I did believe in an interventionist God, I'd kneel down and ask him.

49:18 Not to intervene. Don't intervene when it came to you. Not to touch a hair on your head. To leave you.

49:27 As you are. And if he felt, if God felt, he had to direct you. If God, being an interventionist God, who got involved in people's lives and intervened and so on, if he had to direct you.

49:51 Then direct you. Into my arms. I don't believe in an interventionist God, but I know dialing that you do. But if I did, I would kneel down and ask him not to intervene when it came to you.

50:08 Not to touch your hair on your head, to leave you as you are. And if he felt, he had to direct you.

50:14 Then direct you. Into my arms. And that prayer, that song then becomes his prayer. That the God wouldn't. If the God is like that, that he wouldn't.

50:28 And the more he prays to a God who, he prays. If the more he prays like this from having understood this from the woman he loves, then that begins to shape how he- He is thinking about it.

50:41 And yes, he says on the one hand he doesn't believe in an interventionist God, but on the other hand, by singing, by praying in this way, to what degree is he actually being shaped?

50:51 To thinking and becoming to believe that yes, God can be like this. God can intervene. But if God does intervene, don't- don't touch a hair on your head.

51:00 Leave as you are. Leave you as you are. But if he felt he had to direct you, then direct you into my arms.

51:09 Hence the title of the song. And there are verses that follow. It's worth checking out. It's a lovely song. So this is the, we've been talking, let me move myself back to where we are.

51:20 We've been talking about Lex, Orandi, Lex Credendi. This is the how we pray. Shapes what we believe. And at the same time, we've been recognizing that what we believe also shapes how we pray.

51:35 but, much of the time, when we're praying, what we actually believe is embedded hidden within our prayers. There's an implicit, not an explicit, not an obvious, but implicit, a hidden theology.

51:51 All we'll see on Bye, everybody. Bye. Of what we actually, what we actually believe. And so, it's well worth taking time to think about how we pray.

52:02 And, and, and what we say when we pray and the ways that we pray and so on and so forth, because they reveal this implicit theology, this implicit understanding of who God is.

52:12 And it's one of our key sources, our prayers, for how- how we understand God and how we reflect on God, because there could be the kind of academic theology, if you like, of the kind of stuff that people go off and do in universities.

52:25 And then there's the, ordinary theology. The stuff that we do every day that's embedded into the warp and weft of our lives.

52:32 And if we're praying, that's a key part of our lives. And so, the theology that's embedded in our prayers, hidden, is also the session.

52:40 Shaping what we believe. And sometimes it can be shaping it in ways that are absolutely wonderful and fantastic. Most of the time, God willing, most of the time.

52:48 But it can also be that the way we pray is also shaping what we believe about God in unhelpful ways.

52:55 And it could be that then we need a little bit of that, the way we believe beginning to shape in the other direction.

53:02 And, you know, those two ways kind of, the other directions that we're talking about with the vagris, that the way we believe is actually shaping the way we pray.

53:10 And so on and so forth. But for this part, we've been paying more attention to the sort of the implicit theology, the hidden theology, the ordinary theology that's embedded in the way we pray, how we pray.

53:25 Okay. So this is what we've been doing. you when we've been looking at how we pray, shapes, what we believe.

53:33 So that's the first part of those two things that we've been looking at, in this session five, when we're looking at how do we worship and pray.

53:42 So in the next video, in video three, we're going to be looking at how do we worship. We've covered quite a bit of ground already in this.

53:51 And, with this in mind, I really would encourage you, especially given that we've been thinking about prayer. We've been reflecting on how we pray ourselves.

54:01 We've been thinking about the theology that's embedded in our prayers. There's ordinary everyday kind of theology that's there and shaping what we believe about God.

54:11 It would be good to take time before moving to the next video to think about how do we worship takes.

54:16 Thanks. Some time. A, deliberately posting these, as I say, every time, two weeks before we actually meet to give you enough space to step back from the material and let it sink in.

54:26 And especially this kind of thing, when we've been thinking about how we pray. Something that's very personal, very intimate, very vulnerable, Take your time over these coming days.

54:34 Maybe have a space before you turn to the next video, a space of a day or two, or something like that, to give yourself, Time to sort of absorb this kind of understanding, and then we'll be ready together to turn to this next video, video three of session five, and that's when we'll be looking at how

54:51 do we worship. There we go. See you soon, everybody. Take care.