

# Our Place at His Place

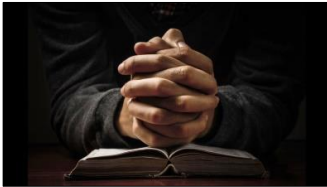
## *A Wing and a Prayer*

November 22, 2020

*Welcome to where we're learning how to do our part – especially when it comes to prayer.*



**How much of your faith do you own?** And how much is on loan, dependent upon and clinging to the faith of a parent, spouse, teacher, or pastor? Intimacy always reveals the true nature of a relationship; so **nothing reveals the reality of our faith like our prayers.** We're digging into two of Jesus' three big commands concerning prayer, that accompany **the Lord's Prayer ... Guide.**



The whole subject of what part prayer actually plays in moving God's hand within God's will is mind challenging, and easily misunderstood, and even more easily miscommunicated. Last week I said **the purpose of prayer isn't to get God to act**, but to stay in touch, partner up, refocus our mind, realign our heart, and learn to trust His answers. And that first line there caused some confusion that came up in the Q&A. So, allow me to rephrase my point: the purpose of prayer isn't to **force or manipulate** God to act.



But the Lord calls us to pray, and **we're given a partnership role in prayer** – albeit *junior* partners – and **there are doors that only open through prayer.** And I want to talk about how we partner up with Dad, in a bit. But for now, let's get it in our head that no matter how hard we pray, or whatever we say in whatever way, **we can't coerce Dad to give us less than His eternal best.** Okay. Now, about partnering up. It all begins with Jesus' *command* to be sincere.

When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, **[the pretenders]** – Matthew 6:5 NIV



Ever hear someone pray in a group setting and suddenly take on a resonance or a reverent tone that thee didst not taketh in thy normal life? Good hearted. Misguided. A little offensive. This is King James. *Thee* King James. KJ of the KJV.



The only one who could ever sincerely speak “King James”. I wonder who *he* tried to imitate when *he* prayed? Know what your prayers are supposed to sound like? YOU! If they sound like anything or anyone else, Dad is displeased. Know how I know? He just said! So **when you partner up in prayer don't pretend.** Our Father *hates* that. Jesus later adds an odd detail about these hypocrites.

[They make] the tassels on their garments long ... they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi’. **[Teacher]** But ... do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. – Matthew 23:5-9 NIV

He doesn't mean we can't use the word "father" – even Jesus does so (Lk 16:24) – He's warning them not to regard any man in the role reserved for our Father in heaven. **The relationship must be between you and God alone.** It can't be between you and some teacher, preacher, parent, or friend ... and our Father. **There are no piggyback rides to the throne back home.** So, how much faith do you own – and how much is currently on loan?



So, back to that odd detail. Why'd they make "the tassels" on their garments "long"? Was that the fashion? No. Those tassels were commanded by God through Moses.

Throughout the generations to come you must make *tassels* for the *hems* of your *clothing* and attach the tassels at each corner with a *blue* cord. – Numbers 15:38 NLT



There's no time to get into why; but notice what's not instructed: the length. And blue dye was *expensive* (like gold). So the lower those tassels dangled, the wealthier the wearer, and in their way of thinking, the more favored by the Father. So those hypocrites loved their lavish, low ridin' threads. And trust me, it's all gonna tie-dye in with Jesus' second command.



When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites who love to pray ... where everyone can see them **[and their blue frayed hem lines]**. ... But when *you* pray, go into your *room*, close the *door* and pray to your Father ... in *secret*, – Matthew 6:6 NIV



What's the big secret? Well if I knew yours, it wouldn't be much of a secret now would it. But Jesus makes one thing clear: **you and your secrets belong in our Father's presence.** Now take a look in this "room" (lit. chamber or storeroom); it's a **private place** or **secret space**. Remember how Jesus would get away to pray; and they'd get worried and go searching? (Lk 4:42) Well, like Jesus, **we need to find a way to pray away from the fray.** Jimmy King put it this a'way:



When thou prayest, enter into **thy closet**, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; – Matthew 6:6 KJV

That's where the term "prayer closet" comes from. Trouble is, closets didn't exist in Jesus' day. Most homes were just an open, all-purpose, room. "But where'd they keep all their shoes?" Larger homes might have a storeroom, like a pantry. But that word for "door" is *really* broad; it just means an opening, a way, or a passage that can be shut. So Jesus is actually telling them to, **shut yourself up in your private prayer place.** Think about it. These boys are far from home, on the road with Jesus. And Jewish custom dictated praying several set times each day.

So, is Jesus telling 'em to run home to pray in a storeroom they probably don't have? No. He's referring to the portable private praying place that each one had with him. On his person even.

Ever hear the expression “blanketed in prayer”? Since before Jesus’ day, Jewish men have shut themselves into a prayer shawl called a **tallit**. It means **Little Tent**. It’s a mobile miniature tabernacle. Hear what King David had to pray about our Father’s *big* tabernacle:

Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer ... I long to dwell in *Your* tent forever and take refuge in the shelter **[covering; secrecy]** of Your wings. **[kanaph]** – Psalm 61:1,4 NIV



Ever notice Dad has a thing about having wings? What’s up with the wings? “It’s symbolic.” Yes, of course. Except when it’s literal – like the wings King David is referring to. See em? The side curtains coming down. Know why we call the sides of a stage, its wings? Because the “walls” are big soft cloth ... wings. *Jesus* had wings. Wanna see ‘em? Remember His command through Moses?



Throughout the generations to come you must make tassels for the **hems** **[kanaph: wings]** of your clothing – Numbers 15:38 NLT



It’s the same word King David uses. Sometimes, when applied to clothing or tabernacles, translators replace the word “wing” with “hem” or “edge” or “fringe” or “corner”. Now, we don’t know *exactly* what Jesus’ tasseled tallit looked like, but this’ll do. And when you spread your arms it makes wings. **They’re not flying wings, but they are wings**. That’s why Ruth (in the book of Ruth) when she asks Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer, to marry her, she says:



Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer. – Ruth 3:9 ESV

Jewish grooms cover their brides with their wings to symbolize **protection, security, comfort, friendship**, and **oneness**. Remember the sneaky woman who snuck up and secretly touched the hem of Jesus’ tallit?

A large crowd followed and pressed around Him. the crowds almost crushed Him. And Just then a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years but no one could heal her. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind Him in the crowd and touched the **edge [the hem, fringe, or wings]** of His *cloak*, because she said to herself, “If I *only* touch His *cloak*, I will be healed.” and immediately her bleeding stopped. and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. – Mt 9:20-21; Mk 5:24-29; Lk 8:42-44

Why’s she sneaking around? Because she’s not allowed anywhere near there. She could be stoned for what she’s doing. **Everything she touches is contaminated**. And she’s been unclean, alienated, and ostracized for twelve years.

This is her deep, dark, secret. **She can’t outrun it, but she can overcome it**. If she can just secretly reach out to the Lord’s hemline.

At once Jesus realized that power had gone *out* from Him. “Who touched me?” Jesus asked. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched *My clothes?*” When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the people are *crowding* and *pressing* against You.” “You see the people *crowding* against You,” His disciples answered, “and yet You can ask, ‘Who touched Me?’” But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. “Someone *touched* Me; I *know* that power has gone *out* from Me.” – Mark 5:30-32; Luke 8:45-47a NIV

I love this story! How often do you see Jesus caught off guard? So **did Jesus have less power?** No. He had more. Why? Because He never had power. He is power. That’s why it went out “from Him”, not “of Him”. And second, **His is the power of love**. And that’s **the one power that increases the more it goes out from you**. So, want more? Give more.

Then Jesus turned and saw her. the woman, knowing what had happened, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at His feet. In the presence of all the people, and, trembling with fear, told Him **the whole truth**. **Why she had touched Him** and how she had been instantly healed. Then He said to her, “Take heart, “Daughter, your *faith* has healed you. Go in peace.” and be *freed* from your suffering.” – Matthew 9:22; Mark 5:33-34; Luke 8:47b-48 NIV

Now, we’re told that *everyone* pressed in to touch Jesus for healing. (Lk 6:19) So why’s His power only go out to her? I’m sure they all believed as much as she did that they’d be healed. That’s why they’re pushing and shoving to get to Him. And, they’re all very persistent in their efforts.

So what gives? It’s all about *why* she did what she did. “Trembling with fear, [she] told Him the whole truth” of “why she had touched Him” believing “if I only touch His cloak, I will be healed”. Based on what? Superstition? Imagination? Assimilation? Logic? No. There’s a reason Jesus stops the presses and makes a huge deal out of this. This is a big moment. **This woman has faith ... in God’s Word**. The last words King David spoke were about the coming of Jesus.



The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me: “When One rules over men in *righteousness* ... He is like the *light* of morning at *sunrise*” – 2 Samuel 23:3-4 NIV

[And the Lord declared through the prophet Malachi] To you who *fear* My name the *Sun of Righteousness* shall arise with *healing* in His wings [kanaph] – Malachi 4:2 NKJ

So, how is *her* faith and desire different from the others? **They were acting on desire based on their desire**. Whereas, she was acting on hope based on God’s promises. **Faith isn’t about its own strength**; it’s about its object. Especially when it comes to prayer. **Faith in faith is faith in yourself**. Whereas, **faith in God’s Word is faith in Dad**. We’re not acting in faith if we’re not trusting our Father’s promises; and **it’s not possible to trust what we don’t know**.

Everyone was trusting in, and acting on *something*: superstition, magic, spirituality, mysticism, positive energy, or *whatever*. But, only one that day put her trust in Jesus His way. **Every action we take is based on trust in something**. And if it’s not His Word, we’re just being pushy. So when it comes to partnering with our Father, we need to know His Word, and reach out in faith.



Think that sneaky woman had any idea the impact she'd have? Remember all those pushy shovers pressing in? Well, a few months later, we read for the first time, that after that ...

Wherever He went — into villages, towns or countryside — they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged Him to let *them* touch even the *edge* [a.k.a. the wings] of His cloak [tallit], and [Guess what!] *all* who touched Him were healed. — Mark 6:56 NIV

What?! Can you even picture that? Those so ill and infirmed that they have to be carried and placed in position. Which would've been two long parallel rows, creating a path for Jesus to walk between, with outstretched wings, brushing and briefly covering anyone reaching out in faith. And leaving in His wake, healed bodies, leaping up and laughing and praising God! And creating an incredible, heart stopping picture of the fulfilment His testimony in Malachi.

For you who fear My *name*, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in His wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture. On the day when I act" ... says the Lord Almighty. [Who also goes by the name of Jesus] — Malachi 4:2-3 NLT

When it comes to partnering up with Dad, **He requires that we do our part**. And for the most part, that means **reaching out in faith without being pushy**. And, of course, basing our faith on His Rock-solid Word, rather than our own fleeting feelings. If they hadn't done their part and assembled and reached out, they would've missed out. It's like that with prayer. **If we don't reach out, His power won't go out**.

But let's get it in our head that no matter how hard we pray, or whatever we say in whatever way, **we can't coerce Dad to give us less than His eternal best**. Okay? He doesn't like to be pushed around. So **get undercover and reach out by praying your heart out**.

And whatever His will, He *will* cover you with His wings.

Let's pray ... *together*:

Our Father 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 forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. — Matthew 6:9-13 NKJ