# Immeasurable: Posture

## Where Does Prayer Start?

**Big idea:** Prayer starts with who God is and what He has already done, not with what we need.

Aim: To explore Paul's understanding of prayer, our relationship with God as Father, and what it means to approach Him with humility, gratitude and a wider perspective.

### Getting started: Where does prayer start?

Opening question:

When you pray, what do you usually start with?

- Thanking God?
- Asking Him for something?
- Confessing something?
- Simply talking to Him?

**Leaders:** Allow people to share honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. Introduce the idea that prayer can easily become a list of things we want God to do, rather than an opportunity to recognise who He is and what He has already done.

### Read the passage

Read Ephesians 3:14-15 together.

> "**For this reason** I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."

Context: Read Ephesians 2:12-19

**Discuss:**

1. What does Paul say about the position of Gentiles before they came to know Christ? (2:12)
2. What has changed because of Jesus? (2:13-14)

3. What does it mean that we are now members of God's household? (2:19)
4. How might this have changed the way Gentile believers understood their relationship with God?

**Leaders:** Paul is writing primarily to Gentile believers who had previously been outsiders to the promises given to Israel. Through Jesus, the dividing wall has been broken down. They are no longer strangers but members of God's family.

The words "For this reason" in Ephesians 3:14 point back to everything Paul has been describing in chapters 2 and 3.

Key thought: We don't pray to become part of God's family. We pray because, through Jesus, we already are.

## Prayer starts with grace already given

Read Ephesians 3:12 and Ephesians 2:18-19 again.

Paul doesn't begin his prayer with a list of requests. He begins by remembering what God has already done.

Consider this statement: "Who He is before what I need."

**Discuss:**

1. Why do you think Paul spends so much time reminding the Ephesians what God has done before telling them what he is praying for?
2. How easily can our prayers become a list of requests?
3. What's the difference between approaching God because we want something from Him and approaching Him because we know Him as Father?
4. How might remembering God's grace change the way we pray?

**Leaders:** Emphasise that asking God for things isn't wrong. Jesus encourages us to ask. But Paul demonstrates a different starting point: gratitude and confidence in what God has already done.

Personal reflection:

Think about your prayers over the last week. How much time have you spent thanking God for who He is, rather than asking Him for what you need?

## Prayer starts on our knees (5 minutes)

Read Daniel 6:10 and Luke 22:39-42.

Paul says, "I kneel before the Father."

Kneeling was not the usual Jewish posture for prayer. Standing was more customary (Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11).

Consider these three examples:

- Daniel: Knelt and gave thanks to God, even when doing so put his life at risk.
- Jesus: Knelt in Gethsemane, submitting Himself to His Father's will.
- Paul: Knelt before the Father in gratitude and dependence.

**Discuss:**

1. What do you think kneeling communicates about our relationship with God?
2. What do Daniel, Jesus and Paul demonstrate through their posture?
3. Why might physically changing our posture help us to change our attitude towards God?
4. Are there circumstances when you find it particularly difficult to surrender your own will to God?

**Leaders:** Make clear that God doesn't hear our prayers more effectively because we kneel. We can pray sitting, standing, walking or lying down. The important thing is the posture of our hearts.

However, our physical posture can help express humility, submission and dependence.

Key thought: "I can't do this without You, God."

## Prayer starts with the Father of every family

Read Ephesians 3:14-15 and John 17:20-23.

Paul describes God as the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name".

This is a reminder that God is not simply the Father of our family, our church, our denomination or our particular group of people. He is the Father of every family.

**Discuss:**

1. What does it mean that God is the Father of every family?
2. How might this challenge the way we think about people who are different from us?
3. Think about the people you have prayed for recently. How far beyond your immediate family, friends and church did those prayers reach?
4. Are there people or groups of people that you find difficult to pray for? Why?
5. How might our prayers change if we genuinely recognised God as the Father of every family?

**Leaders:** Connect this back to Ephesians 2. Jesus has broken down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile. Paul is writing to a church made up of people from different backgrounds who are now one family in Christ.

Our prayers should reflect that unity, rather than reinforcing the divisions Jesus came to remove.

Further reflection: In John 17:20-21, Jesus prays not only for His immediate disciples but also for those who will believe through their message. That includes us!

What does it mean to know that Jesus prayed for us?

## Personal response and prayer

Return to the opening question: Where does prayer start?

Three things we've discovered:

1. Grace already given: We pray in response to what God has done, not to persuade Him to act.
2. A posture of humility: We come before God recognising our dependence on Him.
3. The Father of every family: Our prayers should reach beyond our own little circles.

> Who He is before what I need.

**Personal challenge for this week:**

Pray once on your knees for someone outside your own family, friendship group or church family.

If kneeling isn't physically possible, find another way to express humility before God.

Start by thanking God for who He is and what He has done. Then pray for that person.

**Leaders:** Keep the discussion focused on the two verses rather than trying to cover the whole of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. The aim is to help people discover where prayer starts, rather than simply what they should pray for. We'll cover the rest of his prayer in the next two weeks.