



## Starting Point For Effective Prayer:

Understanding prayer is not the issue ...  
Knowing God is the issue!

1. Knowing God begins with our humanity encountering His divinity.

*“God bless those who are poor and realize  
their need for him,  
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.”*

Jesus – Matthew 5

**The Point:** Spiritual poverty is where prayer *begins*, because spiritual poverty is where knowing God begins.



## Starting Point For Effective Prayer:

Understanding prayer is not the issue ...  
Knowing God is the issue!

2. Knowing God also requires that His divinity encounters our humanity.

<sup>8</sup> *The LORD is gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and rich in love.*  
<sup>9</sup> *The LORD is good to all;  
he has compassion on all he has made.*  
Psalm 145

**The Point:** We approach God morally bankrupt and stained with sin ... *BUT God approaches us* resplendent in love & affection, forgiveness & compassion, grace & truth.



Prayer will always remain a vague, safe exercise until we are impacted by God - exposed to His character, which comes up against our own sinfulness and the culture in which we live which deeply infects us as people ...

At this point we discover that we are loved by God, and known by him – a true friend who knows everything about me and accepts me because he loves me.

When this occurs, we also realize that we are imprinted with His image and likeness, having the divine ability to relate to and communicate with God in prayer.

James Houston



## Assumptions:

### 1. Prayer is instinctual.

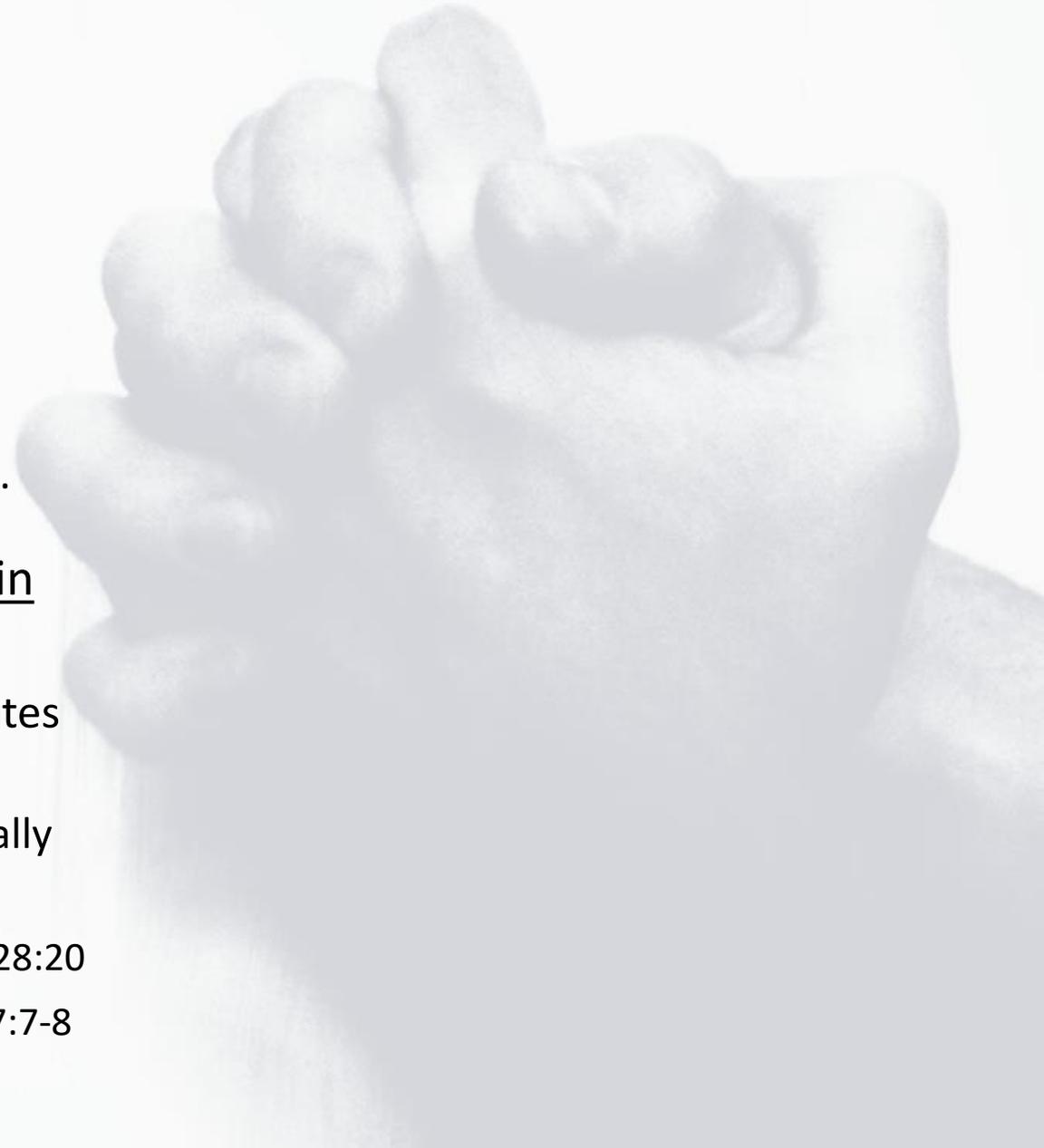
- God has “wired” us to seek Him in prayer.

### 2. Prayer originates with God.

- He initiates a conversation with us.
  - ✓ this is the Bible’s great story: God creating a world to share in His glory and goodness with.

### 3. Prayer is relational in its purpose, and individual in its content.

- God knows every person He has created, and invites us into prayer personally & individually.
  - ✓ this, too, is the Bible’s great story, and especially the New Testament’s.
    - “*I am with you always ...*” Matthew. 28:20
    - “*Ask ... Seek ... Knock ...*” Matthew 7:7-8



**The Point:** Prayer is our reply to God ... as He seeks to develop an individual, personal connection with us.

- These assumptions about prayer – instinctual, God initiated, personal – are foundational to much of our Christian behavior:
  - how we read the Bible.
  - how we understand Church history.
  - how we structure our worship.
  - how we organize our life together.
  - how we see our life today and our eternity tomorrow.



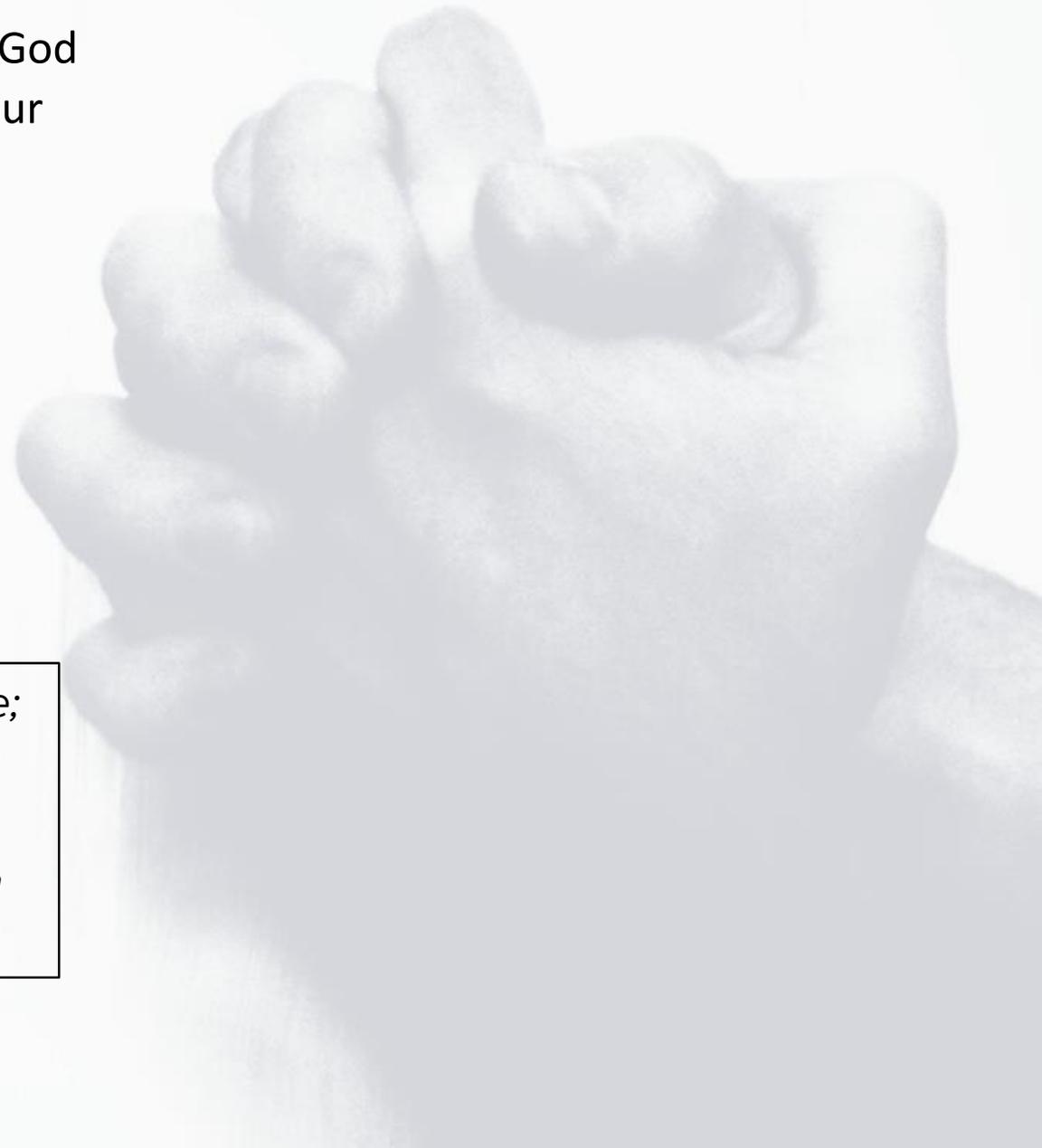
Christian prayer is the continuation of a conversation that God has started ... and seeks a real, personal connection with our Creator – not simply to get information about Him, but to actually meet Him and hear what He has to say to us.

Tim Keller

**Truth:** God wants us to know Him, and has made Himself known!

*The Lord is my Shepherd ... He leads me; He guides me;  
He restores me; I will not be afraid for You are with me;  
You prepare a table for me in the midst of my enemies;  
Kindness will follow me throughout my life; I will be with  
you forever.*

Psalm 23

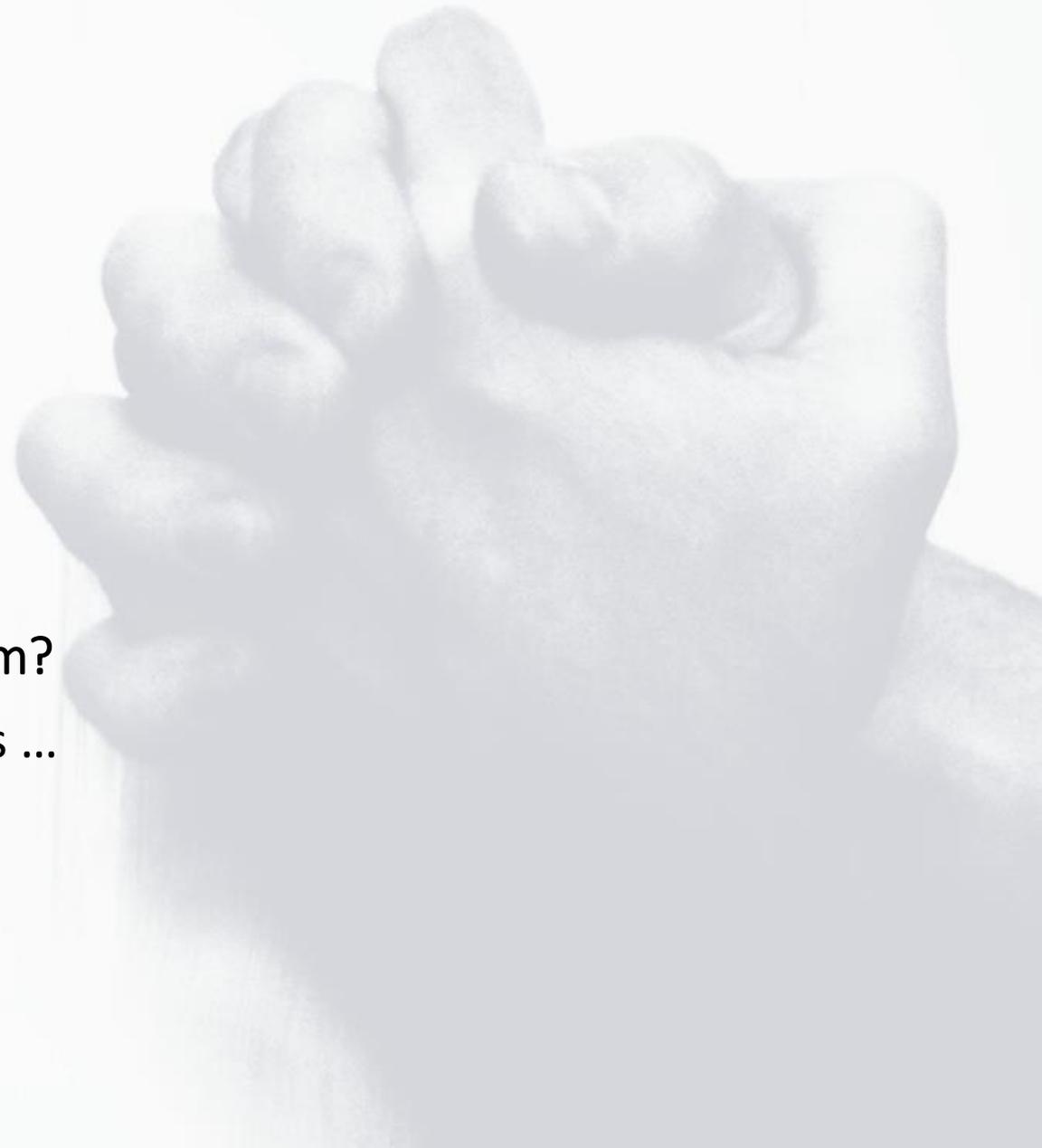


**Issue:** If God has spoken so clearly to us, why do we often struggle with painful uncertainty regarding His will for our lives, and His responses to our prayers?

**Reminder:** Understanding prayer is not the issue ... Knowing God is the issue!

So then ... How has God provided for us to know Him?

- what are the preferred ways He speaks ...



## 1. Creation.

*<sup>1</sup> The heavens proclaim the glory of God.*

*The skies display his craftsmanship.*

*<sup>2</sup> Day after day they continue to speak;  
night after night they make him known.*

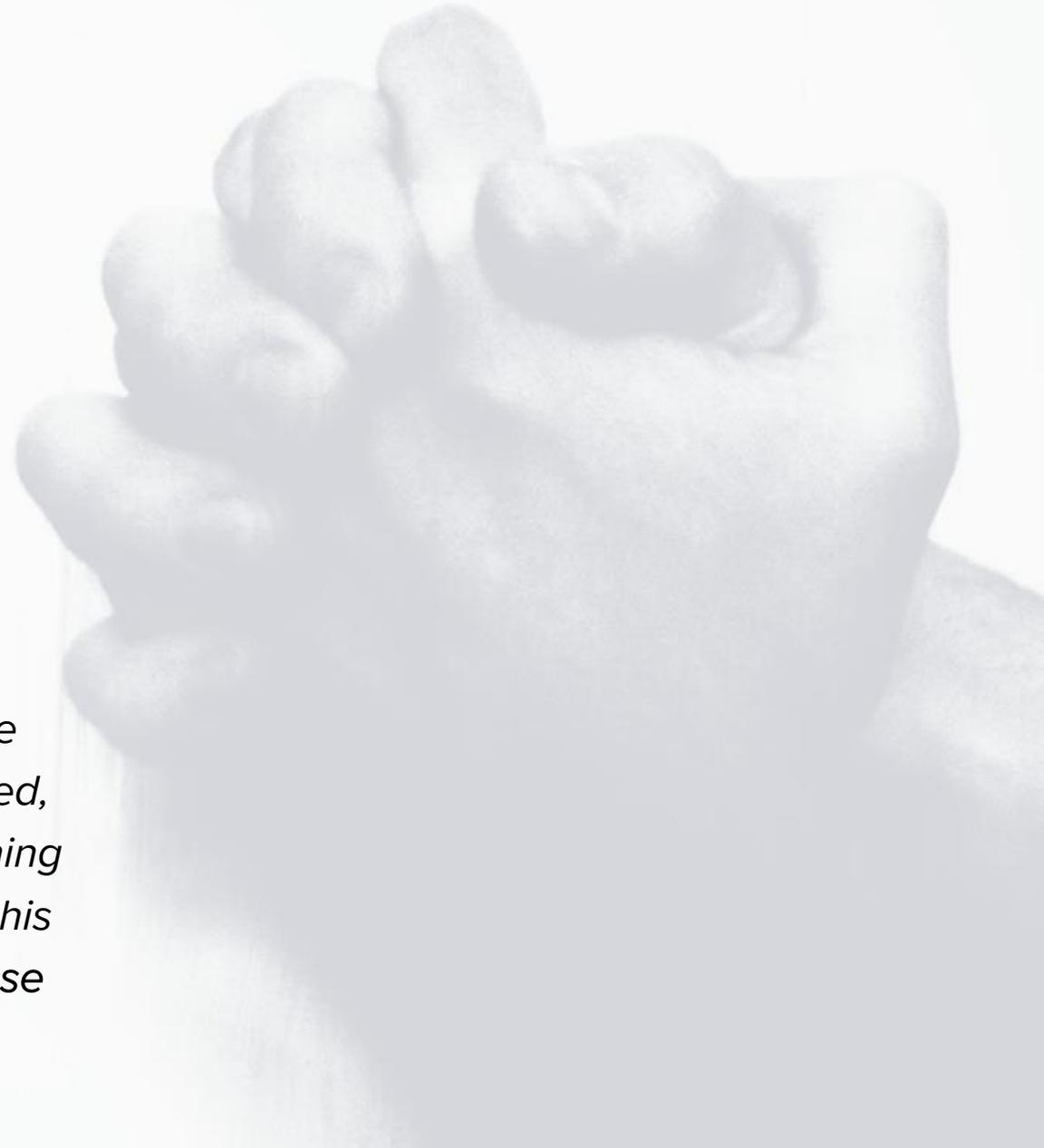
*<sup>3</sup> They speak without a sound or word;  
their voice is never heard.*

*<sup>4</sup> Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,  
and their words to all the world.*

Psalm 19

*<sup>19</sup> We know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to us. <sup>20</sup> For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, we can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So we have no excuse for not knowing God.*

Romans 1



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Romans 1

### What is God saying?

- Get into my Creation ...  
... and off your devices!

## 2. The Bible.

*<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
and a light on my path.*

Psalm 119

*<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.<sup>17</sup> God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.*

2 Timothy 3



To understand the Bible is not simply to get information about God. If attended to with trust and faith, the Bible is the way to actually hear God speaking and also to meet God himself ... As Eugene Peterson writes, “by plunging ourselves into the sea of God’s language found in the Bible –studying, thinking, reflecting & pondering the Scriptures with our searching hearts and minds – we will learn to pray, perhaps just as slowly as a child learns to speak.”

Tim Keller



*<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.<sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.*

Hebrews 4

### What is God saying?

- Read my Story – the Bible!
  - consistently
  - deliberately
  - prayerfully

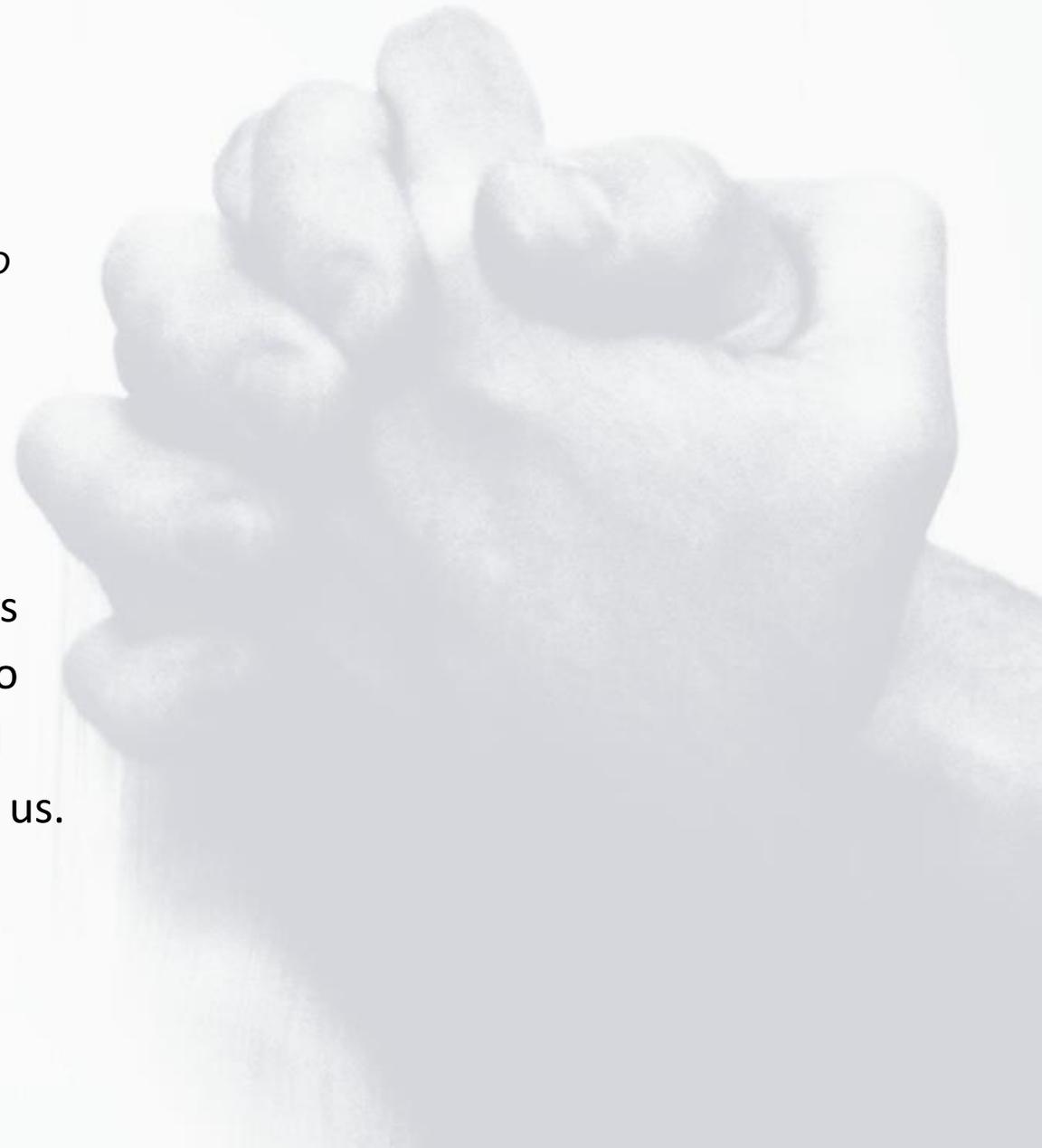
### 3. Jesus.

*1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. 2 And now in these final days, God has spoken to us through his Son.*

Hebrews 1

Left to ourselves, we will pray to some god who speaks what we like hearing, or the part of God we manage to understand. But is critical is that we speak to the God who speaks to us, and to everything that he speaks to us.

Peterson



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Peterson

#### What is God saying?

- Pay attention to my Son!
  - behold me as I have come to you – clothed in flesh and facing life as you face it.

*<sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*

*Jesus – John 15*

When we focus on knowing God through His preferred ways of speaking to us:

- our prayer life will change,
- or discernment will increase.
- our lives will mature.



4. The Holy Spirit.

5. The Church.

Next week.

