

Keeping on Track through Prayer

Read [Matthew 6:9-13](#)

In a recent flight from Brazil back to the United States I read in *Parade* magazine hosted a photo contest a few years ago, asking people to send in photographs of interesting road signs in America. Among the top ten were the following signs:

- A sign in the Mojave Desert that said: “Absolutely Nothing—Next 22 Miles.”
- A sign near Tallahassee, Florida, with this helpful insight: “Water on Road When Raining.”
- A stop sign in Shreveport, Louisiana, with the official subtitle: “And Smell The Roses.”
- A sign in central Oregon: “Soft Shoulder—Blind Curves—Steep Grade—Big Trucks—Good Luck!”
- And a sign next to a traffic light in Fort Walton Beach, Florida: “This Light Never Turns Green.”

These are interesting road signs, to be sure, but perhaps not all that helpful. As we travel the road of life, we also encounter many “**signs**” along the way, messages from peers and culture and media telling us which way to go and how to live. They are often very interesting messages, but many of them are not very helpful. Many of them are even destructive.

As we come to the end of the Model Prayer, we find some “**road signs**” for life that we can trust. Jesus told us to end our prayer with this statement:

Matthew 6:13c (NASB)

¹³ **'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.']**

Why did Jesus tell us to end our prayer with this statement? Because it contains *three truths we should have in the forefront of our mind as we get up from prayer* and head back out into the world—truths that will serve as “**road signs**” to keep us on track through life.

We’ve been studying the Model Prayer with the understanding that Jesus would not have told us to pray a prayer that didn’t work. We’re adjusting our focus a bit as we look at this last statement of the prayer. Just as Jesus would not have told us to pray a prayer that didn’t work, He also would not have told us to pray a prayer *that didn’t matter*. He told us to end our prayer with the statement “*yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory*” because it contains three truths we should have in mind as we get up from prayer.

Let’s look at what these truths are, and how they will keep us on track through life.

TRUTH #1: GOD IS IN CHARGE

Jesus told us to pray, *“yours is the kingdom.”* When we get up from prayer, we’re to keep in mind that the *“kingdom”* belongs to God. He’s the One in charge.

A pastor who was an avid golfer was taking part in a local golf tournament. As he prepared to tee off, storm clouds rolled in. The organizer of the tournament pointed them out to the pastor, and said with a smile, “Preacher, I trust you’ll see to it that the weather won’t turn bad on us.” The pastor shook his head and said, “Sorry. I’m in sales, not management!”

It is important that we get up from prayer remembering that God is in charge. As we can see, it will relieve us of unnecessary burdens. It is not up to us to control the weather, the world, or even all the circumstances of our life. God is ultimately in charge. It relieves us of burdens and helps us enjoy life when we remember this.

Let’s talk about what it means that God is in charge, examine some evidence that God is in charge, and then explore the benefits of knowing that God is in charge.

What does it mean that God is in charge?

It does not mean that everything that happens is His will. That should be obvious since the Bible says, *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* ([Romans 3:23](#)), and sin by its very definition is something that is against God’s will. In addition, Jesus said, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”* ([John 10:10](#)). So the *“thief”* (Satan) is doing many things against God’s will in people’s lives. Not everything that happens is God’s will.

What does it mean, then, to say that God is in charge? It means that in spite of the rebellion and evil in the world, God is working out a plan. He will have the last word.

And it’s a plan that will work out well for those who love God:

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

ROMANS 8:28 (NASU)

God is working out a plan, a plan that will turn out well for those who love Him. He will have the last word. That is what it means that God is in charge.

Is there any evidence that God is in charge in this crazy world?

There is plenty of evidence in history that God is in charge, directing the world toward a good end. One example of God’s hand at work in history can be seen in the circumstances that were in place when Christianity burst on the world scene, circumstances that worked together to give the new Christian message maximum impact.

Four helpful circumstances were in place when Christianity was born:

1. The *Pax Romana*, or the Roman peace. Because of Rome's dominance, there was relative peace in the world in those days, at least as far as the influence of the Roman Empire stretched. Other nations did not dare challenge them. This meant that Christian missionaries could take the Gospel from nation to nation in relative safety.
2. The Roman road system. The Romans built some 50,000 miles of hard-surfaced roads, stretching as far away as Britain. They built them for military purposes. Christian missionaries used them to take the Gospel from nation to nation.
3. The prevalence of the Greek language. Greek was much like English is today, a sort of "**universal**" language among the nations of the Roman Empire, the common tongue. This gave the early Christians a language to share the Good News in as they traveled about. Even the New Testament was written in Greek.
4. The Dispersion, or *Diaspora*, of the Jewish people. Because of wars and exiles throughout their history, Jews had been forced from their homeland, and lived in cities throughout the Roman Empire. This meant that they established synagogues in these cities, where they worshiped God and taught the Old Testament, including the promises of a coming Messiah. Not only Jews came to the synagogue, but "**God-fearers**"—Gentiles who worshiped the God of the Jews—also attended. All of this made for a ready audience, among Jews and non-Jews, when the apostles arrived with the Gospel.

These four helpful circumstances were present on the world stage when Christianity was born, and enabled early believers to spread the faith with maximum impact. It was not an accident that they were present; it did not "**just happen.**" **God was in charge, directing world affairs.**

Is there more evidence from history that God is in charge? Well, in 1998 Life Books published *The Life Millennium: The 100 Most Important Events & People of the Past 1,000 Years*, in which it ranked the most important events since the year 1,000. Making the list were events such as the **Wright brothers' flight at Kitty Hawk (#27)**, the **dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan to end World War II (#16)**, and **Columbus's voyage to the New World (#2)**.

But the event that ranked #1—the most important event of the last millennium, according to *Life*—was the printing of the **Bible on Gutenberg's printing press in 1455. Why is this event ranked #1?** This event led to the Bible, as well as other books, being distributed to the public at large for the first time. All of which led, eventually, to the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and the subsequent political and industrial revolutions—which brought us, among other things, the United States of America.

But the point I want to make is that the invention of the printing press at this time in history was no accident. It happened about the same time scholars were starting to

translate the Bible out of archaic Latin into the languages of the people. John Wycliffe had already created an English translation (about 1382). William Tyndale was about to follow suit (in 1524), for which he'd be burned at the stake. And Martin Luther—hiding from his enemies in a lonely castle, and growing a big beard as a disguise—was about to produce one in the German language (1522). It was at this moment in history that the printing press was invented.

Was this a coincidence? I don't believe so. I believe God was in charge, directing history.

Let me share one more example of God's hand at work in history, directing world events. Have you ever considered how fortunate it was that America developed the atomic bomb during World War II and not Nazi Germany? Especially when you consider that Albert Einstein, whose theories led to the creation of the bomb, was a German, and lived in Germany as Hitler came to power? It would have been more likely, it seems, for Germany to have ended up with the bomb.

But Einstein was a Jew, and Hitler hated Jews. When he began to persecute them, Einstein fled to America. When World War II broke out, he wrote one of the most important letters in history. He wrote to President Roosevelt, warning that the Germans might be working on the development of an atomic bomb, and urging "watchfulness and, if necessary, quick action on the part of" the United States. This letter led to the Manhattan Project, and to the United States developing the atomic bomb and not the Nazis. (You can read Einstein's letter for yourself on the Internet.)

Was it just luck that the Free World developed the atomic bomb and not the Nazis? I don't think so. I believe God was in charge, directing world events. History reveals His hand at work.

We have seen what it means that God is in charge—that He is working out a plan, a plan that will turn out well for those who love Him. He will have the last word.

We have seen evidence that God is in charge in history.

What is the benefit of knowing that God is in charge?

The benefit of knowing that God is in charge is peace of mind. When we get up from prayer knowing that His "*is the kingdom*"—that He is in charge of the world, and of my life in it—we can have peace of mind as we go about our day.

We sorely need this peace of mind today. The National Institute of Mental Health recently stated that anxiety disorders are the number one mental health problem in the U. S., afflicting some 19 million adults. Anxiety is also the number one mental health problem for children ages 9 to 17. We have a need for peace of mind today.

Are you stressed out? A couple of psychiatrists, Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe, developed a list of Life's Most Stressful Events. Take a look at the list and see if you're dealing with any of these stress-inducers:

The Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale—Life's Most Stressful Events

1. Death of a Spouse
2. Divorce
3. Marital Separation
4. Imprisonment
5. Death of a Close Family Member
6. Personal Injury or Illness
7. Marriage
8. Dismissal from Work
9. Marital Reconciliation
10. Retirement

Are you dealing with any of these stress-inducers? Other events on the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale include pregnancy, a change in financial status, a major mortgage, a child leaving home, a change in residence, and even a change in church activities. Peace of mind can be hard to come by.

The key to having peace of mind believes that God is in charge—of the world, and of my life in it.

I read about a woman who always left behind little crumpled-up pieces of paper when she left church. The man who cleaned up after services would find them in the pew where she sat. Little notes were written on the pieces of paper: “Debbie—illness.” “Mike—a job.” “Rent money.”

The man took the notes to the pastor and told him about it. The pastor asked the lady about it the next Sunday, and she explained, “I know you’ll think it’s silly, Pastor, but I saw a sign on a city bus that said, ‘Take your worries to church and leave them there.’ I write my worries down on those little pieces of paper every Sunday morning. When the service is over, I crumple them up and leave them in the pew. I think God wants me to leave my problems at church.”

This woman had found the key to peace of mind: believing that God was in charge of her life. She was doing what the Bible tells us to do: **“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7)**. You can do it, too. You can give Him your worries and trust Him to be in charge of them.

The benefit of knowing that God is in charge is peace of mind.

The first truth we should have in mind as we get up from prayer is **“yours is the kingdom.”** We should know that God is in charge.