Bob: Have you ever tried to share something with a friend who just couldn’t relate to whatever it was you were going through? When you express your cares to God, He understands. Here is Dr. Crawford Loritts.

Crawford: One theologian made the observation that only the one who fully resists temptation can know the extent of its force. I believe that. So in that regard, Jesus is not out of touch with what we are going through. He understands your battle with lust; He understands your torturous battle with jealousy and envy; He understands your struggle with insecurity. Anything imaginable—Jesus understands it. He has been there.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Friday, May 21st. Our host is the President of FamilyLife Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. We will hear today from Crawford Loritts about the power of making your requests known to a sympathetic high priest.

Welcome to FamilyLife Today; thanks for joining us on the Friday edition. I remember being in high school—it was a journalism class I was in, I think—and the teacher said, “I’m going to talk to you today about a word that many of you have probably never heard. It is the word empathy.”

I think it was the first time I had ever heard the word. I had heard sympathy, but I had never heard empathy. He just talked about being able to feel along with another person and to express your care because you enter into the sufferings of that person. It is good to know when we come to the subject of prayer—which is what we are going to be addressing today—it is good to know that we have a high priest who is empathetic.

Dennis: Yes. I was thinking about a passage that talks about the high priest who has passed through the heavens Jesus Christ the Son of God. It encourages us to hold fast to our confession. Hebrews 4:15 “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

I can’t imagine there is a listener who doesn’t need grace right now in time of need. We just move through season after season of needing to cry out to God and say “God, I need your perspective. I need your wisdom. I need your grace. I need your mercy.
Prayer is one of the most important spiritual disciplines that we as followers of Christ can practice today.

**Bob:** We have been praying and asking God for provision here during the month of May haven’t we?

**Dennis:** We have. We had some generous friends of FamilyLife who gave us a pledge actually it was a matching gift up to $300,000 so if people give that amount the full amount of that $300,000 would be matched. What we need listeners to do here as we finish out the month is we need listeners to give generously to FamilyLife Today and say I stand with you. What we are all about here is bringing the timeless biblical truths of scripture to your house in your relationship with your spouse and your children and your extended family.

We are really cheerleaders encouraging you to trust God with the problems that you have and the times of need you are facing. Right now is one of those needs in our lives at FamilyLife Today. We need some listeners to give generously and say I stand with you. The reason is is that we are running behind. We are running behind according to our expenses here at FamilyLife. I need to come to you and ask if you could help with a gift of any amount I’d be profoundly grateful.

**Bob:** You can make a donation online at FamilyLifeToday.com or you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY. Again the donation you make this month is going to be matched up to that amount which is a little more than $300,000 that has been pledged.

We are not there yet so we are hoping to hear from you today. Go online or call 1-800-FL-TODAY. We want to say thanks in advance for whatever you are able to do. We do appreciate your partnership with this ministry.

I was thinking about the message we are going to hear today Part 2 of a message from Crawford Loritts on the subject of prayer and some folks might say I know you talk about marriage and family why are you talking about prayer? I would just say if you have been married or if you have a family I’m guessing you’ve done some of this, right?

**Dennis:** I was not aware of how much I needed God until I got married and then God gave me children and it wasn’t doubled but quadrupled a couple of times. I think marriage and family were designed by God to be redemptive in our lives to cause us to trust Him increasingly. There is no better barometer in your life or mine than your prayer life.

**Bob:** As we hear Part 2 of this message from Dr. Crawford Loritts who is the senior pastor at Fellowship Bible Church in Roswell Georgia. He and his wife, Karen, speak at our Weekend to Remember® Marriage Getaways. He’s a long time friend of the ministry and a board member here at FamilyLife.

**Dennis:** He is.
Bob: He begins Part 2 of this message with the same passage that you referenced Hebrews 4 talking about our sympathetic High Priest.

Crawford: Turn to that great text in Hebrews 4. I want to read this brief paragraph and then walk right back through it. Listen to these words beginning at verse 14. The writer of Hebrews says “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” It’s important to understand the progression of this brief little paragraph. What he is saying and how he is describing in almost awe inspiring terms the ministry of Jesus on our behalf.

It is absolutely amazing. He is pictured as our great caring loving intercessor. Verse 14 tells us he is our security. “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.” We hold fast our confession predicated on the perfect work of Jesus. Nothing else needs to be done. We have stability in him. He is our security. We don’t need to waffle. We don’t need to be rattled. Everything that we have is found in Jesus.

The idea of being a perfect High Priest is the portrait that is played with throughout the whole book of Hebrews. That Jesus unlike earthly priests is not in adequate. He is the perfect High Priest. I don’t want to insult your intelligence but a priest had two roles. He represented the people of God and God to the people. We are in Christ. So we stand gratefully secure. Humbly secure. Incredibly stable. Nothing can touch us because we’re in our representative.

Then in verse 15 he underscores the whole concept that he knows what we are going through. It’s one thing to have a powerful representative out here but it is another thing to have someone who has been through what we have been through.

He says, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.” That word means to feel by reason of common experience. He knows exactly what we are going through. He sympathizes with our weaknesses.

“But one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” I don’t want to get into the theological debate as to whether Jesus could have sinned or could not have sinned or all of these things. One theologian made the observation that only the one who fully resists temptation can know the extent of its force. I believe that. I believe that. I think it is the people who have endured hellacious temptation without stumbling that appreciate the depths of the consequences that could have happened.

So in that regard Jesus is not out of touch with what we are going through and that is profoundly personal. That is profoundly personal. Jesus knows the depth of all our
struggles whatever it might be. He understands your battle with lust. He understands your torturous battle with jealousy and envy. He understands your struggle with insecurity. Anything imaginable Jesus understands it.

The third observation I’m going to make from the passage is that he is the basis for our confidence in prayer. This little paragraph comes to a point. It’s like driving to this one point. The writer says because of all of this “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Sometimes when we quote familiar passages we just sail right by them because we have quoted them so often. Have you ever been nervous about an appointment? Maybe you had an appointment with a very well known and successful and powerful businessman. You’ve never met him before and it’s very intimidating. So you show up ahead of time and make sure you’ve got your tie and jacket on and not looking too ostentatious and you get up to his suite of offices and his assistant says, “Oh, I’m sorry he’s on the phone right now but he’s looking forward to seeing you.”

So you take a couple of deep breaths and you go over your presentation of what you are going to say to him and what you’re going to ask him for and this kind of thing. Look like you belong here but don’t be too showy. So the assistant comes out and says Mr. so and so will see you right now and opens the door.

You see this smile and he leaps up from behind his desk. Instead of wearing his suit he’s got this tie down and his collar open. He comes around the side of the desk and says “I’ll tell you what. I’m so glad to meet you. I heard a little bit about you. I don’t have a lot of time but let’s sit down here. Do you want something to drink? So tell me a little bit about your family. It is so good to see you. What can I do for you? How can I help you?

We’ve all been in those meetings. Bill Bright was that way. People would be intimidated to meet him but once they stepped in his presence they were totally disarmed by how unimpressed he was with himself.

Now this is the way we need to read verse 16. I want you to measure the terms. “Let us then come boldly” and here’s the line “to the throne of grace.” Think about this. Listen to the word combination. I know we have quoted “throne of grace.”

Throne represents sovereignty and power. Grace represents benevolence and mercy. Because of our representative Jesus who died on the cross in our place and for our sin and became the satisfaction of God, God doesn’t just tolerate the meeting. But when we pray we tap into the sovereign power and resources of God who proactively out of his mercy wants to do the best for us and says that we have access to everything that he has. It’s ours. There’s a portrait of a caring father. There’s a portrait and a picture of a caring and a loving representative in Jesus.
And then thirdly there is the portrait and the picture of a caring and loving intercessor. I want you to go back to Romans 8 and look at two remarkable verses. The Holy Spirit is positioned in verses 26-27 as the one who intercedes for us. I need to back up and say that actually the Bible talks about both the Spirit and Jesus interceding for us. Romans 8:34 talks about that role of Jesus as well as Hebrews 7:25.

I want to make two observations about the role of the Spirit of God which is incredible. The role of the Spirit of God in our prayer life. One he intervenes for us and then secondly specifically he intercedes for us. This comes right out of these two verses. Look at what he says in verse 26. Likewise the Spirit helps, that is the first word, in our weakness that is the second word. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought. That is the third expression— as we ought.

Unbelievable. The spirit intervenes. He helps us. The word help there it’s a Greek tense that could have been translated that he keeps helping us. It doesn’t mean that he help me during a particularly rough time. It doesn’t mean that he help me a few weeks ago. It doesn’t mean that he is a genie in a bottle and you have three wishes and only in these three times will he help you. No, it is a powerful expression. The tense of the verb is that he always helps. He just keeps on helping. He keeps on helping. So the way Paul words this is that he’ll help you carry the load as long as you know you have a load that you need to carry and you can’t carry it.

It says he prays for us as we ought. He intervenes for us. He comes alongside us. Crawford you don’t even know what to pray for. You don’t know what to say. Ever been there? Have you ever felt that? I have felt that many, many times. I feel it all the time. God I don’t know what to do. I don’t know what to say. I don’t even know what to ask you for. Will you help me?

Then secondly he intercedes for us. I’m just blown away that the third person of the Trinity right now is interceding for me. He says in verse 26 “but the spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

And let me just say without getting into a ditch on this I’ve heard some people use this text to apply to speaking in some prayer language to the Lord. I’m not knocking that at all but that is a misapplication of the passage. Grammatically we are not the ones who are groaning and neither grammatically is the Holy Spirit groaning through us. It is the Holy Spirit taking our audible prayer requests before the Father and he is the one who is groaning. We do not know what he is saying. He groans for us. The other implication of the word groaning is that he wrestles for us. He fights for us. He does battle for us. He pleads for us before the Father. What an incredible thought.

A number of years ago I served on a committee that evaluated grant proposals and then submitted our recommendations to this foundation. We had guidelines and if people
wanted us to review what they were doing they had to meet the guidelines depending on the priorities that we got from the foundation for that year we matched the priorities and the guidelines together. There was never a time when any of our recommendations were ever turned down. None of them were turned down. Why? Because we knew the guidelines and those who wanted to get a grant knew the guidelines. Because they matched they were approved.

My question to us is this. Do we know the guidelines? Are we willing to submit to the ministry of the Spirit of God the Father and our representative Jesus Christ? As we view prayer it’s not just a grocery list for God to get busy in my life but for me to hang out with him and to know his heart and to be known by him.

**Bob:** We’ve been listening today to Part 2 of a message from Dr. Crawford Loritts on the subject of prayer. At the end of the day it really is about an intimate relationship with the one who loves us and created us and who sent his son to redeem us.

**Dennis:** Because Christ is our high priest and he paid the price for our sins and defeated death and has been seated at the right hand of God the Father he is right there. He is interceding for us but he also commands us back in Hebrews 4 and I want to read this for the third time here on the broadcast.

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.” Now remember what Crawford said here. He really hammered this point. He was driving a nail at this point.

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” There can’t be a listener who is hearing those words right now who doesn’t need some measure of God’s grace in their lives right now. The throne room of God is open. The door is wide open. Christ is seated at the right hand of God and he says bring it to me. Draw near with confidence. It is a great privilege but also Bob our great responsibility.

**Bob:** Yes. I think of the words of the old hymn that said, “Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.” Not only is the throne room open but the invitation has been sent why would we neglect it, right?

And yet I know for many of us there is this struggle with the discipline of prayer. I read a book earlier this year called *A Praying Life* that I found very helpful and challenging and at the same time it was very practical and very encouraging. It helped me think differently and act differently in terms of my own communication with God. It’s a book we have in our FamilyLife Today resource center. Details about that can be found online at FamilyLifeToday.com. We’ve got other resources designed to help cultivate a deeper, richer, more meaningful, more purposeful prayer life.
Or call 1-800-FL-TODAY. 1-800-358-6329. That’s 1-800 F as in “family” L as in “life” and then the word TODAY. Let me take a moment here to thank those of you who do pray for us on a regular basis. I know because we get e-mails or notes sent to us saying we appreciate the ministry and we are praying for you. That’s very meaningful when we get those kinds of notes and cards from those of you who listen to FamilyLife Today. We count it a privilege to pray for listeners and for donors.

In fact often times we’ll hear from donors to the ministry when they send a donation in they will include a prayer request along with that. Our team gets together regularly to pray for those prayer requests. We count it an honor to do that. If there is anything we can pray for you about we want to invite you to get in touch with us and let us know that you have a need. Our team meets together and we’ll pray for those needs.

Let me ask you to keep in mind as a prayer request the matching gift that we have going on here at FamilyLife month. We have had some friends who have pledged in excess of $300,000 as a matching gift. We are hoping to raise enough money during the month of May to take full advantage of that matching gift. We are asking listeners and friends of the ministry to do whatever they can do in terms of making a donation and I want to ask you to consider making a donation. Also please pray for us that we will be able to take full advantage of this matching gift opportunity. We’ll keep you posted on how that goes. Let me just say in advance thanks for whatever you are able to do in terms of making a donation and for your prayers as well.

We hope you have a great weekend. We hope you and your family are able to worship together this weekend and I hope you can join us again on Monday. We are going to talk about studying your Bible and about how you can go deeper in Bible study than you have probably gone before in less time than it’s ever taken you before by using technology. Scott Lindsey from Logos Bible software is going to be here and I hope you can be back with us for that as well.

I want to thank our engineer today Keith Lynch and our entire broadcast production team on behalf of our host Dennis Rainey I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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