Bob: Doug McKelvey remembers a spiritual turning-point in his life when somebody gave him a prayer book—a Book of Common Prayer—to use for daily devotions.

Doug: More than anything else in it, it was the prayer of confession that just struck me, and specifically the phrase where we’re repenting for things done and things left undone. That stuck in my brain like a grain of sand in an oyster and helped to shape my theology in certain ways over the decades that followed.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Thursday, August 15th. Our hosts are Dave and Ann Wilson; I'm Bob Lepine. We’ll hear today about how God took Doug McKelvey on a spiritual journey from that introduction to a prayer of confession in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, and we’ll hear about how we can make every moment in our lives more holy. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. So, I grew up with a prejudice. My prejudice was—this was shaped—I need to explain this. I grew up in a church where I don’t remember hearing the gospel shared. We were regular going to church, in part because I liked to sing in the choir. They had a good high school choir, so that’s why I was going.

In—I think it was—tenth grade, I went through communicant’s class. Now, communicant’s class meant they were thinking about letting me into the church; right? So this was church membership—you go through the class; you learn this; then you are welcomed in and you have your first communion. I went through this class, and one of the papers that I had to write for this class was on “What Things Would You Change about the Church and Why?” One of the things I said is: “I would change these rote prayers that get prayed in church, because nobody means what they’re saying. They’re just reading words off of a page.” I thought it was in conflict with what Jesus teaches in Matthew, Chapter 6, about vain repetition: “Don’t do this vain repetition.”

Here’s what I grew up, thinking: “Liturgy equals lifeless. There’s no spiritual life in liturgy. It’s just a form; it’s just a pattern. You go through it, and at the end of the day, nothing’s happened. If your spirituality is spontaneous, there’s life there; but if it’s formal, there’s no life in that.” I held onto that prejudice for a long time, until I was in New York City—
the first time I’d ever gone to New York. I went to St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City.

**Ann:** How old were you at this time?

**Bob:** I’m in my mid-30s. I was just looking at St. Patrick’s—never seen a big cathedral like this—it was beautiful. This was after-hours; it was on a Sunday. They’d had worship services there; somebody had left the liturgy from that service on the chair. With my presupposition, I kind of picked it up, looking at it, going, “Yes; I wonder what kind of hocus-pocus is in here.”

I opened it up and I started reading through the prayer of confession that was in this liturgy. I was, all of a sudden, struck by the fact that this prayer that was printed out here was a little more substantive in terms of confessing sin than I usually was in my spontaneous confession of sin. This was actually a guide that would help me think more clearly and more deeply about what I ought to be talking to God about at this point. If all I was doing was chanting the words, then clearly that’s nothing; but if I’m looking at this and going, “This can help guide me *deeper* in my spiritual journey than I would normally go on my own,”—that was a paradigm shift for me—to start to go, “Some of the things that our fathers before us knew about the Christian life, we can learn from.” Now, there’s balance in all of that.

The reason I tell the story is because we’re going to talk today about liturgy, which is a pretty unusual subject on *FamilyLife Today*. Some of our listeners may be going: “You’re talking about what?—[Laughter]—liturgy? I’m not even sure what that means, and I’m a little afraid of it.” Maybe they have my prejudice against liturgy.

Did you ever think about liturgy or liturgical forms?

**Ann:** I didn’t grow up in the church, but I do remember stepping inside a few churches. Everyone would stand and would repeat the liturgy, and I was confused by it—like: “What is happening? Do people *mean* this?” The words being beautiful—I was struck by the depth and meaning of the words—but I also thought: “Do *I* feel this? Should I say it if I *don’t* feel this?”

What did you have, Dave?

**Dave:** I remember, 12 years old, Episcopal church—standing there as a young boy with my single mom and doing liturgy/reciting it and feeling some of the same things you did, like: “Do we mean this? Do we understand this?”

I do remember the feeling in that church. This was a church that, when my little brother died, Reverent Ashton was in our home to help us through that. It was high church, and I missed it later.
Bob: Yes.

Dave: You know, I don't think I understood it as a young boy. I was sort of like you, Bob; I started trying to piece it together and say, “Is this deep, and is it meaningful?” I didn’t discover it was until years later.

Bob: Yes; well, we have a guy joining us today, who has embraced liturgy in kind of a whole new way. In fact, he’s written a book called Every Moment Holy, which is a collection of liturgies for—not for church use—but for personal use.

Ann: —for every area of your life, basically.

Bob: A liturgy for laundering, a liturgy for washing of windows, for home repair, before taking the stage—that's one maybe we should have gone through—[Laughter]

Ann: I think some moms would be thinking: “What?! I’m going to read this before I do my laundry? I can barely pray! How do we do this?”

Bob: Exactly; so Doug McKelvey joins us. Doug, welcome to FamilyLife Today.

Doug: Thank you so much.

Bob: Hearing us talk about our views of liturgy—you grew up in east Texas.

Doug: I did.

Bob: Did you grow up in a liturgical tradition?

Doug: I did not. It was interesting—hearing you describe your journey—because in some ways, mine was similar, though coming from a different perspective, denominationally. I grew up very much with a suspicion of anything liturgical/of anything that seemed formalized rather than spontaneous.

It was only during the time that I was in college that really the wheels came off of the theology that I had sort of accumulated, along the course of my years growing up. I was left not knowing what to believe, other than the basic fundamentals of the faith.

Bob: A crisis of faith for you?

Doug: Very much so; very much so. It was during that time that I was first introduced to the Book of Common Prayer. More than anything else in it, it was the prayer of confession that just struck me; because as I read it, I just instinctively thought, “This is something I can trust.” There’s the weight of the history of the body of believers that have gone before me, who have crafted their theology/a Scriptural theology into an
expression that can lead me—that can guide me—specifically, the phrase where we’re repenting for things done and things left undone.

Bob: Yes.

Doug: That stuck in my brain like a grain of sand in an oyster and helped to shape my theology in certain ways over the decades that followed.

Bob: When I would sit down to confess sin—I know I’m supposed to do this—so I should reflect and “What do I need to confess?”—I’m consciously thinking, “Okay; what bad things have I done?”

The prayer of confession in the Book of Common Prayer, which says, “Lord, we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed.” Now, I hadn’t stopped to consider what bad thoughts that I had; I was just thinking, “What bad things have I done?” I wasn’t thinking, “What bad words have I said?” I was just thinking, “action.”

Then, I wasn’t thinking things I hadn’t done that I should have done, to your point; because it’s: “We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by things done and things left undone. We have not loved You with our whole hearts; we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves…” All of a sudden, I’m going: “Oh, it’s worse than I realized. My sin is a bigger deal—the categories for sin have now been expanded—not just “What wrong thing did I do earlier today?” but “What impure thoughts have I had?” or “What should I have done that I ignored?”

Ann: And yet, it feels impersonal in some ways. If you’re all standing together; you’re reciting this together—it’s not your personal sin, necessarily—so how is it more personal?

Doug: Well, I think probably to explore that question, we should back up a little bit and maybe clear up some misunderstanding of the word, “liturgy,” because the reality is—every church has liturgy, because liturgy is just a term that means the form, and content, and order of a church service.

Bob: So if you sing three songs, and then the preacher gets up and preaches, and then you say a closing prayer, that’s your liturgy.

Doug: That’s your liturgy; yes. It’s not that there are some churches with liturgy and some without.

I find it interesting—in looking back at my own bias against things that were more formal and liturgical when I was younger—and I would like to go back and ask my 16- and 18- and 20-year-old self, “What’s going on with the Lord’s Prayer?” When the disciples come to Jesus and ask Him, “Teach us how to pray,” and He tells them to pray this prayer—this beautiful prayer that is so packed with deep theological truths and
meaning—and that you could spend a lifetime/and we should spend a lifetime meditating on and praying that prayer repeatedly—not as a magical incantation; right?—but as a deep expression of truth that will lead our hearts, that will form and shape our theology, that will further shape our relationship to God and to what we are to be about.

**Bob**: Jesus has just said—before He teaches them to pray the Lord’s Prayer, He said, “Don’t use vain repetition.” So, to the extent that somebody stands up and just mindlessly recites the Lord’s Prayer, they’re violating what Jesus just said about prayer; right?

**Doug**: Right.

**Bob**: Should we think of the Lord’s Prayer, and church liturgy, or the prayer of confession we talked about, or the prayers that you include in *Every Moment Holy*—should we think of these less as scripts to follow and more as prompts for us in our spiritual lives?

**Doug**: I think, for many people, that would be the most beneficial approach. I think, for a lot of people, myself included, with some of the prayers that I pray weekly from the *Book of Common Prayer*—rather than just being a prompt—they do end up being deeply meaningful and an articulation of things that I would not be able to express in the moment, apart from having that guide.

Something that has been very encouraging, in terms of feedback that I’ve had from some of the prayers in *Every Moment Holy*, there is this refrain of people, saying: “Our beloved dog died that we had had for 12 years. Our kids were devastated, and we were devastated; and we didn’t know what to say/how to pray. The liturgy for ‘The Loss of a Living Thing’ gave us the words to express what was already in our hearts but that, spontaneously, we wouldn’t have been able to.”

**Bob**: Turn to that one; will you?

**Doug**: Sure.

**Bob**: Think of a family that’s lost a pet, or maybe it’s an extended relative/a loved one—but a loss of life—and there’s grief going on. I think of Romans 8, which talks about we have “groanings too deep for words.” We don’t know how to pray, so the Spirit prays for us; but if somebody comes along and says, “This can help shape your thinking and your prayers,” that could be beneficial.

Just instruct us; we’ll be your kids. We don’t know what to do; we’ve just lost a pet. You explain to us, Dad, what we’re about to do in reading through this together; okay?

**Doug**: Okay; so this is how it begins: “King of creation, here was Your good creature.”
Bob: And then there’s a moment of silence, you say in the book. Those who are gathered can center their thoughts and prepare their hearts in that moment.

Doug: “Here was Your good creature, oh Lord, pondered and called to life by Your own compassionate design.”

Bob: Then the family, or the kids, or whoever, would respond and say—

Bob, Dave, and Ann: “Here was your good creature, and here were spaces and the days we shared, enjoying the glad company and cheerful fellowship of a fellow creature.”

Doug: “We made room in our lives, room in our home, room in our hearts to welcome Your unique creation; and we gave Your good creature the name…”

Bob: And you’d insert the name.

Bob, Dave, and Ann: “We were filled with a right and fond affection for another living thing Your hands had made, delighting daily in its presence.”

Doug: “Now this season of our shared lives is ended by death.”

Bob, Dave, and Ann: “Our hearts are unprepared for such loss, and we are deeply grieved.”

Bob: And it goes on from there; continues, actually, for one, two—a couple pages.

This is, again, to help guide the folks, who have experienced the loss, into processing it in a godly way/in a biblical way—to think about loss and life and God and death rightly.

Doug: Right; I now recognize that, in the very process of prayerfully thinking through a particular subject—like this one we’re talking about now, the grieving for the loss of a pet—in thinking through that, wanting to understand, scripturally, where our hope lies in that; and how to navigate this process of grief; and how to help our kids navigate this process of grief and find hope, even, in the midst of it.

I now recognize that the Holy Spirit is just as present in that thoughtful crafting and thinking through of a prayer, and the creation of it, as the Holy Spirit is present in a spontaneously-offered prayer; and that it really has so much more to do, in the praying of it, with the posture of our hearts and our willingness and ability to enter into that communion with our Creator in the midst of the moment.

Bob: Well, Dave and I are in the weekly rhythm of preparing sermons for churches. If we said: “You know, the only really valid sermon would be one that came spontaneously. You just need to get up—[Laughter]—right?—in the moment, just come
up spontaneously with whatever you’re going to say; because anything that you prepared ahead of time would be formal.” Well, there’d be some really bad sermons!

**Dave:** There would, and there are. [Laughter] There are some that would say, “That’s the only time the Holy Spirit would lead a sermon”; and it’s both/and; right?

You know, it is interesting—in the forward that Andrew Peterson wrote—I mean, something caught me, as I was reading it, which is exactly what you were just saying. We sort of just experienced it. He says these words—he says, “There are no unsacred moments; there are only sacred moments and moments we have forgotten are sacred.”

I love your title, *Every Moment Holy*. It’s like: “Every moment is pregnant,”—you know—and you’re sort of asking us to “Stop and center.” We were walking up here, to walk in the studio, and bumped into a woman. She has used your book; and we said, “How do you use it?” She said, “It centers me.”

**Bob:** My wife does laundry once a week. I mean, I’m just imagining the rhythm of a wife saying, “Oh, it’s laundry day; I need to get out the book, *Every Moment Holy*, and do the liturgy for laundry.” I mean, that just seems so odd; right?! I mean, you wrote it; does that not seem odd to you?—that you’d get up and do the liturgy for laundry before you wash the clothes?

**Doug:** I can recognize the part of it that seems odd, what seems like an ironic tension at first. But I think that tension exists for us to the degree that our vision of God’s sovereignty over every part of our life and His presence in every moment is deficient.

The reality—I think all of us would agree that God *is* present in every moment/that there is nothing lost in God’s economy. Everything that we do, no matter how mundane and necessary in our lives, takes its context in the larger story of redemption. It’s all going somewhere—it’s all going to the new heavens and the new earth—and our lives now and the parts of our lives now are not disconnected from that.

We experience the disconnect sometimes, but that’s why I wrote this book; because I wanted to remind myself. I thought, “If I could remind myself, maybe it would also serve to remind other people.”

**Dave:** Yes; and I’ll add this—you know, even looking at the title and walking through your prayers in here, it reminds you what you just said: “Every moment is holy.”

**Ann:** —and it’s inviting God *into* every moment.

**Dave:** We have a tendency to think it’s a holy moment when it’s epic. I mean, I’ve been in the NFL for 33 seasons. I went through 12 different coaches with the Detroit Lions, and every single coach wanted liturgy before we went on the field—they didn’t know it—but they wanted me to lead the team in the Lord’s Prayer before we walked on the field.
Why?—because this is epic; their livelihoods are on it; it’s the most important thing in
the world: “We have to pray the Lord’s Prayer”—right?—that’s liturgy to them.

We don’t do that when we do the laundry; we don’t—it’s like: “No; every moment is like
an NFL game. It’s pregnant with meaning, so stop and center yourself.”

Bob: I would hope our listeners would go online, and there’s information about your
book available. We have it in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center.

I can imagine a family getting something like this and going, “This is so different than
anything that has been a part of our family’s spiritual journey,” and just saying, “Let’s,
once a week, pick one of these prayers—something that’s aligned with what’s going on
in our lives—and let’s read it. We’ll read slowly, and we’ll talk about it as we read it, and
let’s just see what it’s like to bring God into the laundry.” Think of how that would shape
the way your children think differently about life and about God and how all of that
comes together.

Again, we have copies of Doug’s book, Every Moment Holy, in our FamilyLife Today
Resource Center. You can order it from us, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; and by the
way, it’s a beautiful book. It’s something that your family will enjoy looking at. Order it
from us at FamilyLifeToday.com, or call to order at 1-800-FL-TODAY. The book, again,
is Every Moment Holy—online at FamilyLifeToday.com, or call 1-800-358-6329—that’s
1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

You know, I’m thinking about the conversation we’ve had today. It occurs to me that our
goal, here, at FamilyLife® is right in line with everything you’ve been talking about,
Doug. We want to effectively develop godly marriages and families. We want our
listeners—we want the folks who connect with us, here, at FamilyLife—to have God at
the center of everything they’re doing in their marriage and in their family.

That’s not just here in the United States; FamilyLife is a worldwide ministry. We’re
impacting hundreds of thousands of people every day through this radio program, which
is now heard on multiple platforms: through our website/through our events and our
resources.

Speaking of resources, we recently translated the Art of Parenting® video series into
Spanish. In Central and South America, we’re seeing tens of thousands of people get
into Art of Parenting groups and start to go through this material. They’re following
what’s been happening, here in the United States, as people are using the English
language version.

We’re having requests to translate the material into Mandarin and Arabic, and that’s on
the drawing board. We’re trying to raise the money now so that can happen. We had
some friends, not long ago, who said they would match any donations we receive,
during the month of August, dollar for dollar, to try to accomplish—not only that goal—but other goals we have here.

We’re asking FamilyLife Today listeners: “Would you make a donation today to help us expand the reach of FamilyLife and to bring practical biblical help and hope to marriages and families all around the world?” You can donate, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or call 1-800-FLTODAY to make a donation. Keep in mind, your donation will be doubled this month as long as we still have money in that $500,000 matching-gift fund. We'll send you, as a thank-you gift for your donation, a copy of Dennis and Barbara Rainey’s book, The Art of Parenting. You can keep that for yourself or pass it on to someone you know. Thanks, in advance, to being part of this effort. We appreciate you, and we look forward to hearing from you.

We hope you can join us back tomorrow as we continue to talk about some of the everyday moments of life, and how we can see God at work in those moments, and acknowledge His work in those moments. Doug McKelvey will be with us, again, tomorrow. I hope you can be here as well.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our hosts, Dave and Ann Wilson, 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; a Cru® Ministry. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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