YOU CAN BE TOTALLY HONEST WITH GOD

He wants to know exactly how you feel. The Prayer Coin, written by Our Daily Bread author Elisa Morgan, will help you express your deepest emotions to God and have confidence in His will. Explore Jesus’s prayer in the garden of Gethsemane and see His ultimate example of intimacy with the Father. Learn how to trust God the same way Jesus did when He said, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Experience the hope of praying with honesty, abandoning yourself to God, and growing closer to Him.

Elisa Morgan served twenty years as the CEO of MOPS International, is an author for Our Daily Bread, co-hosts the syndicated radio program Discover the Word, and has written over twenty-five books.

To order more of The Prayer Coin or any of over 100 other titles, visit odb.org/discoveryseries.
In ancient times, coins were formed through a process of melting valuable metals in an intense heat of over fifteen hundred degrees and pouring the resulting liquid into molds to form round “blanks.” Each blank was then sandwiched between a pair of dies with engraved designs.
A coin is “minted” when the blank is struck, or hit with a hammer, forcibly imprinting a different design on each side to create heads and tails (or obverse and reverse, to use more official coin language). While the process is highly automated today, minting of coins still involves striking metal through force to create a two-sided currency.

Prayer is like a two-sided coin, minted in the heat and pressure of life and spent in the bent-knee of practice.

*Elisa Morgan*
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We are a praying people. We can hardly help ourselves. In a pinch when we need help. Under our breath in a moment of frustration. For loved ones in need of hope. Over our troubled world. After a stunningly happy surprise. We pray.

Yet we can find prayer baffling. Our tongues grow heavy. Sometimes prayer is just plain scary—after all, what do we say to the God of the universe? At other times, prayer can be unsatisfying. We wonder, Is God listening? Why is he taking so long? Are we praying in the wrong way?

We look to the Lord’s Prayer for guidance. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

We examine and interpret each phrase. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

We mouth our own prayers after its formula. Give
us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

We beg God to intervene according to its model. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

We memorize it.

A clear prayer formula, right? No doubt. After all, Jesus offered the model in response to the disciples’ plea, “Teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). In Matthew 6:9, Jesus says plainly, “This, then, is how you should pray.”

That should work, then, right? But sometimes it doesn’t seem to.

And in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus beckons us, saying, “Ask and it will be given to you” (Matthew 7:7). So we do. Sometimes we receive. Sometimes we stand gapingly empty.

Then there is Luke 18:1 where Jesus “told his disciples a parable to show them they should always pray and never give up.” We ratchet up our efforts with consistency and sincerity. Sometimes we see results. Sometimes we don’t.

What can we expect—really expect—when we pray? How can prayer bring us closer to God? How can we come to trust prayer to deliver results?

One Sunday morning several years ago, as I was listening a bit robotically to the sermon, my pastor arrowed into my prayer thoughts. “If you always do what you’ve always done,” he said, “you’ll always get what you’ve always gotten.”

_Do something different in prayer, Elisa._

Okay . . . but what? I kept my eyes and ears open to what “different” might be, with very little result. Was this message from God?
Then help came from an unexpected source: The garden of Gethsemane.

In the deepest hours of Jesus’ life on this planet, a two-sided coin of prayer was forged. In the crucible of that garden, pressed between what he wanted and what the Father wanted, Jesus prayed, “Take this cup.” But then he said, “Not my will.” Two sides of Jesus. Two sides of us. Two sides of prayer.

The Prayer Coin.

The “pop” in my thinking was palpable. What might I discover about Jesus, God the Father, and myself if I teeter-totter my utterances between the two sides of the coin: what I want and what God wants?

I paused to let the concept sink in. What, really, is the state of Take This Cup? Perhaps a state of “honest”? An unapologetic verbalization of what is truly within? And what, really, is the condition of Not My Will? I mull over my personal language. Surrender. Yieldedness. Relinquishment. But another word has the stickiness needed to stay. A startling word at first (is it even the proper part of speech?), yet it sums up the surprise necessary to grab my heart: abandon. Not as in being abandoned by another. No, abandon as in giving oneself completely over to something. To Someone.

Take This Cup: honest.
Not My Will: abandon.
Two sides of prayer.

I muse over them, wondering which side I pray most often—and why. What might I be missing by not—at least once in a while—considering the other side, following where it leads?

I have vacillated in my prayer coin, depending on the
season. In my earliest prayer postures, as an apprentice in prayer, I chose abandon. Zealously smitten with my new Love, I open-palmed my life before Jesus.

Later, likely experiencing burnout, I leaned honest. I cranked open my heart and poured out its contents in unbridled freedom. Honest caught me up into an intimacy that invited me closer to God with more of me.

Somehow, I pivot on the edge of honest, straight into abandon.

I see a progression. First, I get more honest with God about what I want. Next, I’m more able to embrace his acceptance of me in wanting what I want. At that point, living in abandon, I’m able to be more honest about more levels of what I want, and as a result I’m more able to live in abandon to what he wants. And on and on it goes.

What if I flip-pray this prayer coin, spinning myself between the two sides, one being my desire, the “honest” plea, and the other being the “abandon” of surrendering to his will—all while my relationship with God grows more and more real?

Surely, I’ll never drink the cup Jesus drank. But what if I kneel alongside Jesus in his garden prayer and consider how his ricocheted efforts—between what the human Son wanted and what the divine Father wanted—might become a model of what’s available to me in prayer? More honest. More abandon. More… intimacy with God.

Up it flies—the prayer coin—into the air of discovery. Down it comes. Time for you to make the call. What’s it going to be? Honest or abandon? Or…both?
Jesus’ Two-Sided Prayer

“. . . take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” (LUKE 22:42)

Jesus’ prayer life was different from ours. Jesus lived prayer. Like breathing, he prayed.

When his disciples nudged Jesus to eat after a long day of ministry, he responded, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about” (JOHN 4:32). His prayer focus would match this idea of Richard Rohr, “Prayer is not ‘one of the ten thousand things.’ It’s that by which we see the ten thousand things.”

Jesus’ Garden Prayer

How utterly consistent then that deep in the darkest night of his life, Jesus crumpled in agonized prayer over the torture set before him. As he prepared for the greatest battle ever to be fought, he called out to his Father for help, wielding the weapon of a single, two-edged sentence.

My heart twists as I imagine the setting. It’s the wee hours of the morning—maybe 1 a.m.—after a long day of Passover celebration and summary
teachings offered over the meal. Judas, the betrayer, slinks away to do his deed. The remaining Eleven trudge with Jesus from the upper room, east through Jerusalem and outside the walls, and across the Kidron Valley to their destination: Gethsemane.

Gethsemane is a spot familiar to the disciples (Luke 22:39), as Jesus often took them there for private conversation and teaching (John 18:2).

Jesus asks his followers to follow, to watch and to pray against the temptation of not following. But the disciples swoon under the weight of a busy week. Their eyelids dip and they doze. Weak and without the strength of understanding, their well-meaning spirits slip.

Still imagining the scene, I observe Jesus kneeling, face focused upward, the moon’s reflection spotlighting his sincerity.

I focus on Jesus, the man-God. He no longer kneels in haloed holiness but buckles to the dirt, cheek smeared with mud, nose grazed against the cold of a stone, fingernails tearing at the soil, body recoiling into the fetal shape he once occupied within the womb of a woman.

And here, pressed down in a garden, Jesus lifts the prayer coin: “Take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

I wonder, Have I ever settled in on this part of the story? This three-hour window referred to as “the sanctuary of the sorrow of Jesus’ soul.”² Have I deeply considered the torturous tug-of-war that led to his eventual sacrifice for me?

Have I entered into Jesus’ garden prayer?
Jesus’ Two-Sided Prayer

Two opposite pleas pierce Jesus’ final pre-crucifixion night before the Father. On the one hand, he leans human. On the other, he surrenders divine. That he does both at once is stunning. That there is a record of his doing so—for us to witness and, maybe, model—leaves me tongue-tied.

How did Jesus pray both sides of prayer? How could he say both “no” and “yes” in a single supplication? Such a braided duality! Take This Cup. Not My Will. And why would he? Fully God, why would he need to request the removal of something he knew he would ultimately triumph over?

Mashed together in Jesus’ two-sided request are two opposite prayers. One is a vulnerable plea to avoid the suffering of the cross, made to the Sovereign One who controls all things. The second prayer is an understanding that Jesus’ ultimate purpose on earth was to provide a way out of our predicament of sin.

Jesus prayed both sides of the prayer coin. Honest and abandon.

Jesus’ Invitation

Jesus invites participation in his prayer. As he pours out his heart to the Father, he taps his disciples to accompany him. To keep watch with him. Eventually, to pray for themselves against the temptation they would face. To listen to him as he prays the most anguished prayer of his days on earth. Take This Cup. Not My Will. Jesus invited his disciples then… and perhaps he invites his disciples now.
In the garden, Jesus’ wording is specific: “Sit here while I go over there and pray” (Matthew 26:36), or, “Sit here while I pray” (Mark 14:32). His request is simple: “Be with me while I pray.”

That’s it. Just show up and be present. To witness his honest and his abandon. To observe and absorb his two-sided prayer. Take This Cup. Not My Will.

Luke reports that at some point Jesus withdraws further, “about a stone’s throw” (Luke 22:41), several yards beyond the disciples. Death is truly a solitary journey. Jesus’ isolated death made it possible for God to go with us in ours. Because he was alone, we never will be.

Three times Jesus asks his disciples to join him—because he needs them here for himself and because he needs them here for themselves. And three times, the disciples disappoint. His response includes understanding of and compassion for their human ordeal of bodily and spiritual exhaustion (Matthew 26:41–43; Mark 14:37–41; Luke 22:45–46) as well as a level of exasperation (Matthew 26:40). Could they not have stayed awake just one hour? They have no response (Mark 14:40).

Jesus invited his disciples then . . . and he invites his disciples now. You and I are invited to participate.

My prayer antennae twitch at the thought. Perhaps here is a two-sided practice that speaks solutions into our prayer problems—both for those of us experienced in prayer yet still wanting more and for those of us unacquainted with the practice at all. Here is a model for our personal decision-making moments. An everyday tool for the forging of an unbroken relationship with the God who made us to be one with him.
three

Jesus’ Honest—Take This Cup

“. . . take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” (LUKE 22:42)

Three raw words form a plea punctuated by Jesus’ heavy sweat, “like drops of blood falling to the ground” (LUKE 22:44). Is there a more honest request than side one of Jesus’ garden prayer? Take This Cup. Translated: What I want.

We draw back in discomfort at the impossible image of the human Jesus, like an adolescent opposing his Father’s orders. No way! That would be sin, right? But Jesus didn’t sin! Hebrews 4:15 tells us, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.” So how could he choose for himself and against the Father with such a prayer? How could he not want what the Father wanted? If even for a moment?
It’s a lot to take in, isn’t it? But it’s real, this first side of his two-sided prayer: Take This Cup.

**Jesus’ Honest Request**

Take this cup. The completely human Christ thrusts the very cup of suffering he’d been designed to drink back at the Father.

The “cup” Jesus references is complex. Included in that cup is God the Father allowing Jesus to be hurt with the punishment and judgment that evil warrants (see Job 21:19–20). Your sin. Mine. Our rebellion against our Creator.

No one else could or would be asked to endure such a challenge.

The pure insanity of what the Son of God was to endure! The injustice! When we stop to consider what Jesus was facing, it makes total sense that he prayed, “Take this cup.” No wonder he prayed, What *I* want.

Surely the element of temptation played a role here. Likely, as the Son splayed out his plea, the enemy hissed in response, “*You don’t have to go through with this!* Save yourself!”

At the start of his earthly ministry, Jesus had been similarly tempted. It began, as did the temptation in Gethsemane, after an experience of fullness through which Jesus had been prepared. In an overflowing encounter of baptism, the Holy Spirit “descended in bodily form like a dove” and the Father pronounced over him, “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (*Luke* 3:22). Then Jesus was filled with Spirit, led by him (meaning guided and carried) into
the wilderness. There, Jesus was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1–2).

This second round of attack, in the garden of Gethsemane, echoes the first in the wilderness of the desert in Luke 4:1–13. In both cases, Jesus is alone, and he experiences various entry points of assault: Emotional: Wilderness: receive authority by worshiping Satan; Garden: forego separation from God at the cross. Physical: Wilderness: hunger; Garden: avoid torture. Spiritual: Wilderness: test God’s power with a leap off the temple; Garden: abandon his destiny.

After Jesus’ first temptation, Luke records, “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). Here, in this garden, comes that opportune time. A reboot of the earlier threat. And Jesus knows it. Likely, he has dreaded this full-circle reality. In John 14:30, just hours before this garden scene of temptation, Jesus remarks, “I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming.” Here, in the garden, Satan returns with an onslaught of new trials.

Jesus’ response? An honest “Take this cup.” My desire. This is real temptation experienced by a real human being. Jesus was “tempted in every way, just as we are” (Hebrews 4:15).

In his two-sided prayer, is Jesus caving to temptation? Is he reneging on his commitment to save us all? Is he turning from his ultimate purpose?

It’s startling to consider, isn’t it?

Keep going.

Jesus sets up his honest Take This Cup prayer by first acknowledging that God the Father’s will

*Everything is possible for you. If you are willing...* Jesus isn’t asking his Father to jettison his redemptive will. Rather, because he knew that God *could* do anything, Jesus is asking if there is any other way to accomplish the divine will besides drinking the cup.

**Jesus’ Honest Expression**

Even if we begin to understand how Jesus could ask his Father for such a deviation from divine purpose—Take This Cup—we still stand incredulous at his raw expression.

We wince.

Yet, while Jesus knew he had a purpose to accomplish as God, the fully human Son balked—and he said so to his Father. Honestly.

What is Jesus’ state on the eve of his ultimate torture? He is “sorrowful and troubled” (matthew 26:37) and “deeply distressed and troubled” (mark 14:33), until he is “overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” (matthew 26:38; mark 14:34). To be sorrowful in this way is to endure severe mental strain. Such words are rarely used in the New Testament. They are heavy. Just reading them, we bow under their weight.

Honest prayer unapologetically recognizes human limitations and boldly requests help from the Divine. And honest prayer is heard. Ultimately, Jesus’ Take This Cup prayer doesn’t result in his rescue from the garden but rather in his deliverance through it. The ultimate rescue would be from the death on the cross that follows. Yet still, Jesus prays honest.
Jesus prayed side one of the prayer coin because he was convinced that he would be “safe” to do so. That, in fact, there would be something fulfilling and whole-making and unifying in his request. And God the Father actually desired Jesus’ honest pleas, offered with great integrity, as the writer of Hebrews expresses: “and he was heard because of his reverent submission” (Hebrews 5:7).

Honest comes from trust and trust comes from being known. Jesus knew that the Father knew his heart, all of it—so Jesus trusted that the Father would hear his raw three-word request.
Our Honest—
Take This Cup

“. . . take this cup from me;
yet not my will, but yours be done.” (LUKE 22:42)

Re-Learning Honest

As I consider Jesus’ version of honest, I’m challenged as to how honest I’ve really been with God. What if I made Jesus’ honest prayer my honest prayer?

It’s a powerful thought to consider—that Jesus’ honest Take This Cup prayer can be the model for our own prayerful exchanges with our Father.

Take This Cup prayer is “what I want” prayer. A plea to remove the pains and sacrifices we face. This grief. This rejection. This misunderstanding. This injustice. This addiction. This debt. This loneliness. This not-enoughness. This shame.

Take This Cup prayer also might mean, “Give me what I don’t have in my life that I want.” Jesus
prayed “take this cup” as in “remove it”—and he also prayed, “but if that isn’t possible, give me what I need to drink it.” Take this singleness when I want to be married, or give me joy in my singleness. Take this dead-end job when I want more meaningful employment, or give me peace in this current role. Take this impasse with my teen when I want a closer relationship, or give me unconditional love for my child.

We pause and ponder how we could follow Jesus’ example and pray our own version of “Take this cup.” But how does our pain compare to what Jesus endured?

It doesn’t, of course. But our pain is still our pain. Jesus prayed his prayer coin of honest and abandon, embracing the intimacy he possessed with the Father and modeling the intimacy we too can possess. If he died to provide such a relationship, how can we not enter in ourselves?

In fact, by not praying our own version of “Take this cup,” we might actually be doubting God. As if he isn’t able. As if he isn’t God enough to act in the matters that concern us.

**Let’s Be Honest**

Wait, how honest are we talking? Jesus prayed an honestly human request in an honestly human expression. Jesus *experienced* the pain. That honest?

Since I began writing this manuscript—my neck has flamed with pain. I imagine the source: too many granted “uppies” for my two-year-old grandson,
Dominic; helping my brother move furniture into his new home; lugging my luggage across London for a speaking engagement.

I sit to write with a bowed heart, and my neck screams objections.

Honestly, God, take this cup of pain. This cup of interference. This cup of what I don’t want.

I consider going all-out honest in my prayer coin efforts, as Max Lucado directs: “Pray your pain out. Pound the table. March up and down the lawn. . . . Angry at God? Disappointed with his strategy? Ticked off at his choices? Let him know it.”

Can he—God—handle my pounding prayers? I want to think he can. I retrace Jesus’ honest and begin to believe that, surely, God can. Because he heard and responded to the puckered prayers of his Son.

In my best being, I know that something is missed when I avoid honesty. Honest can be our teacher, if we allow it to do its work.

Staying honest, I ask God to remove the pain yet again. Take this cup! And then comes a realization, right there in the honest. Something I hadn’t seen, hadn’t felt. Perhaps something I haven’t wanted to see or feel. Take this pain that signals my need.

Need. I need you, God. I can’t do this on my own. Help. Me.

What if you sensed the pain not as pain but as my presence with you in the writing? What if each time you feel the pain, you are reminded that I know your need and am present to meet it?

But I don’t want you that close, God. I like being in control and believing I can do life on my own.
Bam!
“Take this cup” is revealing. Honest prayer searches the dark crevices in my cranium, ejecting the truth and laying it open for dissection. For examination. So I can see what it is I really want or don’t want. So I can own it and decide.

Dare I go this honest? Before God? (And before the rest of the world reading these words in print?) Margaret Feinberg woos me with her words, “Prayer is the place where I’m invited to present the parts of myself that no one else sees to a God who already knows and loves me anyway.”

I remember Hebrews 4:13, and then read beyond it:

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:13–16)

Jesus prayed honest before his Father because he knew he could. And then Jesus died that we might access honest prayer before our Father too.
Where Honest Takes Us

Think about it. In offering humankind free will, God opened himself to wounding and rejection as well as to love. When we went running from him in the first garden, appalled at our sinfulness to the point of hiding from our very Source, he came looking for us, seeking ongoing connection.⁵

God not only knows us and still loves us, but he also wants us. All of us. He offers us the connection he enjoys in the Trinity. An unbreakable intimacy that flows from love.

The psalmist confidently mirrors the need for the help only God can give: “Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!” (Psalm 116:2 NLT).

Side one of our two-sided prayer coin begins honest. The deep dive necessary to discover what we can ultimately enjoy in the presence of God through prayer starts off with Take This Cup. What I want. What I don’t want. What you want. What you don’t want. When we start honest—with ourselves and with God—we ready ourselves to receive not just what we think we want but what our good God wants for us.

Honest.
Jesus’ Abandon—Not My Will

“... take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” (LUKE 22:42)

Jesus prayed honest, “Take this cup.” But now, in the same breath, in the same sentence, he prays another prayer, seemingly the opposite of the one he just spoke. Side two of Jesus’ prayer coin.

Three other words express perhaps the most chilling moment of relinquishment ever endured: Not My Will.

Translated: Not what I want.

A prayer of abandon.

Abandon. To give up completely. To give up with the intent of never claiming a right or interest in. To give oneself over without restraint.6

Wow! That’s pretty non-negotiable...yet compelling. Yes. Abandon. Yielding my way—and doing so without condition. Abandoned in request and in emotion. Abandoned abandon. Powerful!

Turning over from the honest side of his prayer coin, Jesus now says, “Not my will”—and we feel the impression of honest still with him. Mirrored in his two-sided
garden prayer, Jesus’ honest reflects back to him—and he measures a gap between human and divine.

**Abandon Comes from Choice**

Unless we pause with Jesus in this moment, we might miss the point altogether. We expect Jesus to engage the autopilot of abandon to the divine. After all, his God-ness would teeter him over to this side, right?

We’re actually a bit surprised that there’s any gap—Jesus being God and all. It’s been new information to consider a Jesus torn in this way. But we do pause, because the *honest* Take This Cup side of Jesus has created disequilibrium in our beings. We’re eager to tip him back over into the “Good Jesus” *abandon*. But what we’ve just come to learn about him has made Jesus even more dear to us—more raw, more real—and therefore more essential and connected. We want *all* of Jesus. The honest *and* the abandon.

Take this cup. Honest. We dip ourselves into this territory, trusting God will hear and handle and that he will somehow use honest to make us better.

Take this cup. What I want. We linger with Jesus there.

Then it happens: the flip. Jesus turns abandon. Not my will. What *God* wants. A solid relinquishment of Jesus’ choice in favor of the Father’s choice. An alignment of his destiny with the divine desire.

Ponder the mind-set of Jesus from Philippians 2. Jesus, “who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human
likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (verses 6–8).

Consider each element: (1) Jesus didn’t consider equality with God something to be used to his advantage. (2) Jesus made himself nothing. (3) Jesus took the very nature of a servant. (4) Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to death.

These were Jesus’ voluntary actions. God the Father did not force them upon the Son. Jesus underlines this idea in John 10:18: “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.”

Abandon, then, comes from choice. But remember, Jesus’ lifestyle of abandon didn’t prevent him from struggling with temptation.

And Jesus chose abandon. “He did not sin,” as Hebrews 4:15 says. Or, as the apostle Paul writes, “Christ did not please himself” (Romans 15:3).

Abandon Comes from Love

Such a sacrificial choice to abandon comes from love. Jesus’ abandon wasn’t a matter of God compelling his Son, but rather of the Son willingly and intimately embracing and embodying his Abba’s self-giving love. Jesus’ abandon in the garden—side two of his prayer coin—expresses the abandon of love he exhibited throughout his life on earth, the ongoing denial and relinquishment of his will for the will of the Father.

Jesus wrestled mightily with the enemy while surrendering his will to the Father’s. As he told his disciples, “the prince of this world is coming. He has
no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me” (John 14:30–31).

Jesus chose abandon, and he chose it out of love.

Utter abandon is an exorbitant action—one that was necessary for the work of the cross to be completed.

Even after praying the prayer coin, as Jesus rose to face his betrayer, the guards, the religious and Roman authorities, and the crowds, he continued choosing abandon: “For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

Abandon Grows from Obedience

This two-sided prayer shapes us. It teaches us. It changes us. Perhaps this was the point of the biblical writer who indicated that Jesus “learned obedience from what he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8).

No one would or could drink the cup of suffering apart from the sovereign design and omnipotent strength flowing from divine love. Jesus’ motivation was love responding to Love. As Jesus uttered his two-sided prayer of honest abandon, God provided what he needed to choose the outcome—the strengthening presence of an angel helped Jesus follow the path of obedience and die on the cross for us. Abandon is a choice, coming from love that grows from obedience.

Jesus tossed the prayer coin up in the air, honest first, then flipping to abandon. The coin spun between the two as Jesus’ desires met the Father’s will, until they settled to the ground in union.

Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven.
Our Abandon—Not My Will

“... take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” (LUKE 22:42)

Approaching Abandon

Recall how we’ve defined abandon. To give up completely. To give up with the intent of never again claiming a right or interest in.

What if we prayed this way? Not my will. Not my desire for my husband to be healthy... for my teenager to return home... for my parents to ask for help in their elderly years. Not my will.

What then? There’s a relinquishment here that we may not be comfortable with. A giving over of what I long for, what I believe is best to what God somehow sees. A giving up of what I want for what God wants.
Dare we pray this way?
We need to be careful here. We can too easily default to what I call an “auto-abandon.” As if we’re supposed to surrender, so we do. Thy will be done. There—settled, done. But in our heart of hearts, beneath our outward confession of relinquishment, we’re like toddlers holding tightly to a stuffed toy—something we truly believe will provide the comfort and protection we’ve come to depend on. Often, in that innermost spot, it’s not God.

Auto-abandon isn’t really abandon. It something more like resignation.

Avoiding Abandon
What holds us back from true abandon?
Abandon isn’t safe. Hissing lies slither beneath the surface of my days and nights, coiling their untruths through my thinking.

And I listen as the first lie says, God will hurt me. Surely, he can’t love someone like me. Maybe God isn’t even good.

Then the second lie whispers, God can’t possibly love this wormy, selfish part of me.

Mark Batterson, author of the best-selling book on prayer The Circle Maker, challenges my thinking. “God is not a genie in a bottle, and your wish is not His command,” he writes. “His command better be your wish…. And until His sovereign will becomes your sanctified wish, your prayer life will be unplugged from its power supply.”

His sovereign will? That’s intimidating. And powerful. I squint across the chasm between honest
and abandon, and I consider yet another attempt.

Then it comes, forming in the fog of ambivalence. Yet another reason I fear, perhaps the core cause—a wacky thought really, but it comes: God is not good. Lie number three.

I consider a pronouncement often attributed to Oswald Chambers, “The root of all sin is the suspicion that God is not good.” I sigh.

Baby Steps to Abandon—Answers to Our Avoidance

Let’s go back to Jesus. How he did honest. How he got to abandon.

Oh, but he’s Jesus, you say. I know. That’s the point. We need to let Jesus stomp on the lies that wriggle through our thinking here.

**Lie #1: I can’t pray abandon because I fear that God will hurt me. Jesus prayed Take This Cup and Not My Will and God hurt him.**

But because God hurt Jesus, he won’t hurt us. Tim Keller fastens a hammock of hope over the canyon of abandon, writing, “Jesus got the scorpion and the snake so that we could have food at the Father’s table. He received the sting and venom of death in our place. . . . We know that God will answer us when we call ‘my God’ because God did not answer Jesus when he made the same petition on the cross.”

The “hurt” we fear in abandon is a pain that God himself has carried.

Maybe praying abandon will not cause God to
“hurt” me, but rather it will slice open my hurt places so God can inhabit them with healing.

I take one baby step closer to the right side, to abandon.

**Lie #2:** *But what if God doesn’t really love me? Not so much because he is not loving, but because I am not lovable? What will happen to me when God is put in charge of the awfulness of me in my abandon?*

I love the writing of Canadian farmer’s wife Ann Voskamp. One night, when her husband unexpectedly massaged her feet, she wondered, “Why is it easier to pour out than to let yourself be loved? . . . Letting yourself receive love means trusting you will be loved in your vulnerable need; it means believing you are worthy of being loved. Why can that be so heartbreakingly hard?”

I know why: because I know what’s inside me. The pride. The selfishness. What I did yesterday. The things I thought—just an hour ago.

Stop it now. God is love. And our vulnerable God opens himself to cover my love-fears with himself. Love is not about my worthiness, my enough-ness. It’s about God’s unendingness.

I turn from fear. I open to love.

But then comes one more lie.

**Lie #3:** *What if God, really, is not good? Beyond our understanding. Beyond our comprehension? The abandon prayer of Not My Will would make suicidal sense in such a case.*

Here, from this filthy pit of twisted thinking, is where Satan emerged in Eden to address Eve: “Did
God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1) Hiisssss! How can a good God not want you to eat of the delicious tree? “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ‘For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Genesis 3:4–5). Hiisssss! God is not good—or he would want you to be like him.

Gulp, gulp, gulp. We devour the lies, swallowing them down into our very beings where they merge and integrate, silently morphing into a new reality.

Likely, it was this same untruth that tried to coil itself around Jesus during his garden prayer. God will hurt you! God does not love you! God is not good! Take this cup! But in Jesus’ prayer coin, his honest Take This Cup answered the hiss with solid abandon: Not My Will. Jesus prayed a prayer of absolute abandon because he knew the Father loved him, and he trusted and loved the Father back. I know that God hears my honest requests and receives my honest expression of them. I yield to his goodness. I embrace his presence in my fears. I let him love me. 🧡
Endnotes


3 Max Lucado, *You’ll Get Through This* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 29.


7 Carson, *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, 2051.


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