

# Prayer

S U M M E R   S T U D Y



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## *Welcome to "A Bible Study on Prayer!"*

As you read the Bible, you will note that God is described as both Holy and Relational. He is far above us, and yet desires a relationship with us. Because He is Holy, He is not to be trifled with. We are not to approach Him arrogantly or thoughtlessly; those who do suffer the consequences of their actions.

Leviticus 10: 1-3 reads:

*Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said:*

*"Among those who approach me  
I will be proved holy;  
in the sight of all the people  
I will be honored."*

On the other hand, when we enter God's presence with a correct understanding of our position before Him, we can do so boldly.

Hebrews 10:19-22 reads:

*"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water".*

Throughout His word, God gives us examples of people who came to Him in prayer. As we read these stories we learn how they approached Him, what they dared ask of Him, and how He responded. The writer of Hebrews encouraged his audience to model their lives after those who had gone before: *"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."* (Hebrews 13:7) BECAUSE, *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."* (Hebrews 13:8).

We serve the same God they did; He hasn't changed. As we look at how they interacted with God in prayer, therefore, we will learn how to imitate their faith and approach God with both humility and confidence.

## *How do we use this study:*

We hope you are excited to dig into God's Word and learn about this important topic. You can complete this study on your own, or we encourage you to invite a friend, your family, or your community group to complete the study together so you can discuss what you are learning, pray together, and sharpen each other.

## *Organization of the lessons:*

- **Prayer:** Each week begins with a prayer written by a believer in church history. We've included these as examples of biblically-based prayers that you can incorporate into your own prayer life. We encourage you to take the time to start each day's study in prayer as you seek God's help in growing in wisdom and understanding of His Word.
- **3 Days of Study:** There are three days of study with specific questions and readings. These will cover the main points for each lesson.
- **2 Days Suggested Reading/Study:** We've also included two days with suggestions for further study if desired/time allows. We have organized the study in this way to give you flexibility over the summer and to complete the study in the time that you have.
  - *Each week we've also included a suggested video/podcast from David Platt's Secret Church 2019 as another alternative for further study.*
- **Wrap up:** Each lesson ends with a "wrap up" page which includes the main ideas or take-aways from that lesson as well as space for some summarizing thoughts and how you will apply the lesson to your prayer life.

## *What is Prayer?*

"Strictly speaking, prayer is communication, either privately or in community, with God. More broadly, prayer is maintaining an unfailing awareness of the divine presence and doing all things with Him in mind."

- Rod Dreher<sup>1</sup>

"Prayer is the act of asking God to do what he has already promised to do. We do this through the power of the Spirit as adopted children through the Messiah Jesus. We see this kind of interaction with God evidenced throughout the Bible as his people continue to ask him to follow through on his promises and bring about his kingdom and rule. We can be confident that God will answer our prayer for his purposes because he has explicitly promised to bring his purposes to pass. These include for God to glorify himself, for forgiveness, for our own knowledge of God, for godly wisdom, for the strength to obey, and for the gospel to spread."

- J. Gary Millar<sup>2</sup>

"Prayer, like everything else in the Christian life, is for God's glory and for our benefit, in that order. Everything that God does, everything that God allows and ordains, is in the supreme sense for His glory. It is also true that while God seeks His own glory supremely, man benefits when God is glorified. We pray to glorify God, but we also pray in order to receive the benefits of prayer from His hand. Prayer is for our benefit, even in light of the fact that God knows the end from the beginning. It is our privilege to bring the whole of our finite existence into the glory of His infinite presence."

- R.C. Sproul<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rod Dreher. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, page 58.

<sup>2</sup> J. Gary Millar. *The Doctrine of Prayer*. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-doctrine-of-prayer/>

<sup>3</sup> R. C. Sproul. "If God is Sovereign, Why Pray?" <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/if-god-sovereign-why-pray/>

# LESSON ONE

## *The Beginning*

At the start of each lesson we'll provide a pre-written prayer from a Christian in church history to aid you in your personal devotion time with the Lord. We suggest that you start each day in prayer and you can use the suggested prayer if you want! Feel free to personalize it, or just use it to help focus your heart and mind as you read through. The following is from *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*.

*All-searching God,  
You read the heart,  
view principles and motives of actions,  
see more defilement of my duties  
than I ever saw in any of my sins.  
I am ready to flee from myself because of my abominations;  
Yet you do not abhor me  
but have devised means for me to return to you,  
and that, by the Son who died to give me life.  
Your honour is secured and displayed even in my escape from your threats,  
and that, by means of Jesus  
in whom mercy and truth meet together,  
and righteousness and peace kiss each other.  
In him the enslaved find redemption,  
the guilty pardon,  
the unholy renovation.  
In him are everlasting strength for the weak,  
unsearchable riches for the needy,  
treasures of wisdom and knowledge for the ignorant,  
fullness for the empty.  
At your gracious call I hear, take, come, apply, receive his grace,  
not only submit to his mercy but acquiesce in it,  
not only glory in the cross but in him crucified and slain,  
not only joy in forgiveness but in the one through whom atonement comes.  
Your blessings are as secure as they are glorious;  
You have provided for my safety and my prosperity,  
and have promised that I shall stand firm and grow stronger.  
O Lord God, without the pardon of my sin I cannot rest satisfied  
without the renovation of my nature by grace I can never rest easy,  
without the hopes of heaven I can never be at peace.  
All this I have in your Son Jesus; blessed be his name.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup>Arthur Bennet, (adapted from) "The Name of Jesus", *The Valley of Vision*, 38-39

## **D A Y   O N E**

Spend a few moments and think about prayer: your understanding of what it is, why we pray and what it accomplishes. What has been your experience with prayer? Does it come easy for you or is it more difficult? Write down a few thoughts.

Do you have questions about prayer? Write some of those questions down.

### **In the Beginning...**

We're starting this study in Genesis because it is crucial for us to have an understanding of the God whom we pray to, His power, authority, and attitude towards the people He created. It's also important for us to understand the Fall and how sin impacts our relationship with God, including how we communicate with Him in prayer. Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each.

### **Read Genesis 1-2 and reflect on what we learn about God in these chapters.**

1. According to these chapters, who is God? How would you characterize His existence? What do you learn about His character?
2. What is within His power?
3. What is His attitude towards the world He is creating? (v.1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21-22, 31) What is His attitude towards people? (v.1: 28-30, 2:15-23)
  - a. Do you think people are aware of God's general attitude towards them? What do you think people would say if you asked them how God feels towards humankind?
4. How do these observations of God encourage or challenge you when it comes to your prayers?

## **D A Y   T W O**

Pause and pray before starting today's study.

**Today, read Genesis 1-2 again, but this time reflect on what we learn about people from these chapters.**

1. How were humans created? What made them different from creation? Where did God place them?
  - a. Although Adam and Eve were in Eden, they were not on a holiday; they had a purpose and mandate. What was it? (See Genesis 1:26-28, and 2:15)
  - b. Do you think people today long for purpose & mandate? Do you? Where should we turn to find it? How can we pray for this basic need?

**At the end of Genesis 2, everything is good. But things quickly fall apart. Read Genesis 3 and pay attention to how the different characters act and respond.**

2. What was the first thing the serpent said to Eve? Why do you think he took this approach - what does he want Eve to believe about God?
  - a. How is the serpent's characterization of God's attitude towards people (in Genesis 3:4-5) different from God's *actual* attitude towards them (in Genesis 1-2)?
  - b. How does this discrepancy affect us today?
3. After Adam and Eve ate the fruit, 4 things initially happened (v 7-8). List them below:
  - a. Why did Adam hide (v 8-10)?
  - b. Do we hide from God for the same reason?
5. How do these observations of people and what happened at the fall encourage or challenge you when it comes to your prayers?



## **D A Y   T H R E E**

Pause and pray before starting today's study.

**Read Genesis 3 again and take note of God's response.**

1. Scripture notes that God was walking in the garden in the cool of the day (v 8). What does this verse imply about the normal pre-Fall relationship between God and people?
  - a. What type of relationship does God want with us?
2. Being all-knowing, God is aware of what Adam and Eve have done. Why do you think He approaches Adam and Eve with questions instead of judgment and condemnation?
3. Instead of confessing their sin, what do Adam and Eve do?
  - a. Can we identify this tendency in ourselves? How could this affect our relationship with God and others? How does it affect our prayers?
4. After outlining the consequences of their actions, what does God do? (v 21) What does this action demonstrate?
5. God loves His people. He wants a relationship with people that is characterized by open communication, repentance, forgiveness, and provision. He is gracious and invites us to draw near, yet so often we hide from Him or believe lies about Him. He wants to forgive and help us, but we so often blame others for our situations rather than confess. What encouragement can you find from these first 3 chapters of Genesis to help in your struggle with sin and your issues with trust?

## **D A Y   F O U R / F I V E**

### **Suggested Study**

If you have time this week, choose some of these Psalms to reflect on and pray through in light of what you have studied in Genesis this week. See Appendix 2 and 3 for tips on how to practice praying through Scripture.

Psalms 5

Psalms 8

Psalms 19

Psalms 116

What do these passages teach you about prayer? What insights have you gained? How will this impact the way you pray with and for others?

**OR: Watch or listen:** Secret Church 2019 - Prayer, Fasting, and the Pursuit of God (David Platt)

- Introduction: <https://radical.net/?session=session-1-introduction-4>
- Session 1- Pentateuch: <https://radical.net/?session=session-2-the-pentateuch>

## *Lesson 1 Wrap Up*

### **This lesson's big ideas:**

- God is powerful! He has the authority, ability, and desire to care for and provide for His people. He desires good abundant blessing for His creation, especially His people!
- Humanity was created with a purpose and is created to be in relationship with God, in open communication and fellowship.
- Sin causes brokenness between God and people - and this affects our prayer life.
- We may struggle to pray because of doubt, fear, guilt, pride etc. God is gracious and desires to forgive us, but we often run away and hide instead.

**How has this week's study challenged or encouraged you as you consider your own prayer life?**

**As you finish off this lesson, consider the following questions in your prayers.**



#### **A D O R A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I PRAISE God for?



#### **C O N F E S S I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what do I need to CONFESS  
or repent of?

#### **S U P P L I C A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I ASK God for?

## L E S S O N   T W O

### *Models of Personal Prayer in the Old Testament*

Start each day this week in prayer. Use the following from the *Didache* (an early Christian writing from the 1st or 2nd century) if you want!

*We give you thanks, Holy Father,  
for your holy name, which you have caused to dwell in our hearts,  
and for the knowledge and faith and immortality that you have made known to us through Jesus your  
servant;  
to you be the glory forever.*

*You, almighty Master, created all things for your name's sake,  
and gave food and drink to humans to enjoy, so that they might give you thanks;  
but to us you have graciously given spiritual food and drink,  
and eternal life through your servant.*

*Above all we give thanks to you because you are mighty;  
to you be the glory forever.*

*Remember your church, Lord,  
to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in your love;  
and from the four winds gather the church that has been sanctified into your kingdom,  
which you have prepared for it;  
for yours is the power and the glory forever.*

*May grace come, and may this world pass away.  
Hosanna to the God of David.  
If anyone is holy, let him come;  
if anyone is not, let him repent.  
Maranatha! Amen.<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> Didache, chapter 10: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>

## D A Y O N E

This week we're going to study some Old Testament passages to see what they teach us about *personal prayer*. We'll observe how people addressed God and described Him, how they prayed, and what kinds of things they prayed for, as well as how God responded to them.

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each. (*We've provided answers in the first column as an example for you.*)

	1 Samuel 1 (Hannah)	2 Samuel 7 (David)
<b>How do the characters address and describe God?</b>	<i>Lord of Hosts (ESV)</i> <i>Lord Almighty (NIV)</i>	
<b>What is prayed for? How does the person pray?</b>	<i>She is praying for a son!</i> <i>She asks for God to look on her affliction and remember her.</i>	
<b>What emotions are expressed or implied?</b>	<i>deeply distressed, bitter weeping (v 10)</i> <i>she made a vow (v 11)</i> <i>she was silent - lips moved but made no sound (v 13)</i> <i>pouring out her soul to God (v 15)</i> <i>great anxiety, vexation (v 16)</i>	
<b>How does God respond?</b>	<i>Gives her a son (v 20)</i>	
<b>Other notes or comments</b>	<i>Hannah is so upset that Eli thinks she is drunk. This shows the depths of her pain.</i>  <i>Praying seemed to bring her peace, even though she didn't yet know if her prayer would be answered (v 18)</i>	

What do these passages teach you about prayer? What insights have you gained? How will this impact the way you pray with and for others?

## **D A Y   T W O**

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each.

	<b>2 Chronicles 33:1-20 (Manasseh)</b>	<b>Jonah 4 (Jonah)</b>
<b>How do the characters address and describe God?</b>		
<b>What is prayed for? How does the person pray?</b>		
<b>What emotions are expressed or implied?</b>		
<b>How does God respond?</b>		
<b>Other notes or comments</b>		

What do these passages teach you about prayer? What insights have you gained?

How will this impact the way you pray with and for others?

## DAY THREE

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each.

	<b>Daniel 6:1-11 (Daniel)</b>	<b>Nehemiah 1-2:8 (Nehemiah)</b>
<b>How do the characters address and describe God?</b>		
<b>What is prayed for? How does the person pray?</b>		
<b>What emotions are expressed or implied?</b>		
<b>How does God respond?</b>		
<b>Other notes or comments</b>		

Looking back over your charts from the last three days, what do you notice about prayer?

- What is the importance of knowing God and what He has done?
- What is important about how we pray? Is it posture or attitude? Explain.
- Is anything off limits for *what* we can pray for? Are any emotions off limits?

## ***D A Y   F O U R / F I V E***

### **Suggested Reading:**

If you have time this week, read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the same questions as the charts above.

- 2 Chronicles 1:1-12 (Solomon)
- Isaiah 38 (Hezekiah)
- Jeremiah 32 (Jeremiah)
- Daniel 2:17-23 (Daniel)

What do these passages teach you about prayer? What insights have you gained? How will this impact the way you pray with and for others?

**OR: Watch or listen:** Secret Church 2019 - Prayer, Fasting, and the Pursuit of God (David Platt)

- Session 2 - Historical Books: <https://radical.net/?session=session-3-the-historical-books>



## *Lesson 2 Wrap Up*

### **This week's Big Ideas:**

- These examples from the Old Testament display people who knew who God was and that is why they approached Him. They knew His character, His power, what He was capable of, and what He cared about.
- They also knew their place - they didn't have a sense of entitlement or "I deserve this," they placed requests before Him asking for His mercy
- Their prayers were very straightforward and matter of fact, with nothing magical or mystical about them.

**How has this week's study challenged or encouraged you as you consider your own prayer life?**

**As you finish off this lesson, consider the following questions in your prayers.**



#### **A D O R A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I PRAISE God for?



#### **C O N F E S S I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what do I need to CONFESS  
or repent of?

#### **S U P P L I C A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I ASK God for?

## LESSON THREE

### *Models of Corporate and Intercessory Prayer in the Old Testament*

Start each day this week in prayer. Use the following from *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* if you want!

O God of the open ear,  
Teach me to live by prayer as well as by providence,  
for myself, soul, body, children, family, church;  
Give me a heart frameable to your will;  
so I might live in prayer and honour you  
being kept from evil, known and unknown.  
Help me to see the sin that accompanies all I do,  
and the good I can distil from everything.  
Let me know that the work of prayer is to bring my will to yours,  
and that without this it is folly to pray;  
When I try to bring your will to mine it is to command Christ  
to be above him, and wiser than he:  
this is my sin and pride.

I can only succeed when I pray  
according to your precept and promise,  
and to be done with as it pleases you  
according to your sovereign will.  
When you command me to pray  
for pardon, peace, brokenness,  
it is because you will give me the thing promised for your glory,  
as well as for my good.  
Help me not only to desire small things  
but with holy boldness to desire great things  
for your people, for myself  
that they and I might live to show your glory.

Teach me  
that it is wisdom for me to pray for all I have,  
out of love, willing, not of necessity;  
that I may come to you at any time,  
to lay open my needs acceptably to you;  
that my great sin lies in my not keeping  
the savour of your ways;  
that the remembrance of this truth is one way  
to the sense of your presence;  
that there is no wrath like the wrath of being  
governed by my own lusts for my own ends.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur Bennet, (adapted from) "Living by Prayer", *The Valley of Vision*, page 266-267

## D A Y O N E

This week we're going to study some Old Testament passages to see what they teach us about *corporate and intercessory prayer*. "Corporate" simply refers to prayers in a group and "intercessory" prayer is the act of praying on behalf of someone else. We'll observe how people have addressed God and described Him, how they've prayed, and what kinds of things they've prayed for, as well as how God has responded.

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each. (*We've filled out the first column for you as an example*)

	<b>Deuteronomy 9:9-29, 10:10-11</b> (prayer in v.18-19, 25-28)	<b>2 Chronicles 6:12-7:3</b>
<b>Outline the context - who is praying, where are they, what is going on?</b>	<i>Moses is praying because the people of Israel had made a golden calf and had provoked God's anger. Moses was interceding for the people and for Aaron.</i>	
<b>What is prayed for? How does the person pray?</b>	<i>Laying prostrate before the Lord - not eating or drinking for 40 days!! He prays that God would not destroy the people, but remember His promises.</i>	
<b>How do the characters address and describe God?</b>	<i>O Lord God!</i>	
<b>How does God respond? How much time passes (if applicable)?</b>	<i>The Lord listened (10:10) He was unwilling to destroy them (10:11) They should continue on their journey!</i>	
<b>Other notes or comments</b>		

What do these passages teach you about corporate and intercessory prayer? What insights have you gained? How will this impact the way you pray with and for others?

## D A Y T W O

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each.

	<b>2 Kings 18:17-19:37</b> (prayer in 2 Kings 19:15-19)	<b>Daniel 9</b>
<b>Outline the context - who is praying, where are they, what is going on?</b>		
<b>What is prayed for? How does the person pray?</b>		
<b>How do the characters address and describe God?</b>		
<b>How does God respond? How much time passes (if applicable)?</b>		
<b>Other notes or comments</b>		

What do these passages teach you about corporate and intercessory prayer? What insights have you gained? How will this impact the way you pray with and for others?

## **D A Y   T H R E E**

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each.

	<b>Ezra 9-10:8</b>	<b>Nehemiah 4</b> (prayer in v. 4-5 & 9)
<b>Outline the context - who is praying, where are they, what is going on?</b>		
<b>What is prayed for? How does the person pray?</b>		
<b>How do the characters address and describe God?</b>		
<b>How does God respond? How much time passes (if applicable)?</b>		
<b>Other notes or comments</b>		

With all these stories in your mind, as you review your charts from the past three days, what do you think is the “purpose” of corporate and intercessory prayer?

- What is its impact on the one praying?
- What is its impact on the one (group) prayed for?
- What is its impact on God? If He is sovereign and knows all, why should we pray?

## ***D A Y   F O U R / F I V E***

### **Suggested Reading:**

If you have time this week, read through the following passages and ask the same questions as the charts above.

- 1 Samuel 7:2-13
- 1 Chronicles 29:1-25
- 2 Kings 6:8-23
- Jeremiah 42:1-18

What do these passages teach you about prayer? What insights have you gained? How will this impact the way you pray with and for others?

**OR: Watch or listen:** Secret Church 2019 - Prayer, Fasting, and the Pursuit of God (David Platt)

- Session 5 - The Prophets: <https://radical.net/?session=session-5-the-prophets>

## *Lesson 3 Wrap Up*

### **This lesson's big ideas**

- The corporate prayers were worshipful and centered on who God was and all He had done. They gave praise and glory for His faithfulness.
- The requests were bold, but founded on God acting for **His own glory** and **His name**, based on **His promises**.
- Old Testament prayers are marked by obvious humility and a corporate recognition of sin.

**How has this week's study challenged or encouraged you as you consider your own prayer life?**

**As you finish off this lesson, consider the following questions in your prayers.**



#### **A D O R A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson, what can I PRAISE God for?



#### **C O N F E S S I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson, what do I need to CONFESS or repent of?

#### **S U P P L I C A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson, what can I ASK God for?

## L E S S O N   F O U R

### *Models of Personal Prayer in the New Testament*

Start each day this week in prayer. Use the following written by Tim Keller (which he adapted from John Calvin's Geneva Catechism) if you want!

*Father, thank you for the grace that has preserved my life to this moment.*

*Now give me enough love for this day—a sense of love from you (so I'm not scared or driven), a welling up of love for you (so I'm not proud or selfish), and a resulting love for others (so I am not cold or distracted).*

*Let your Spirit illuminate my mind and enlarge my heart for that. And because it means nothing to begin well if one does not persevere, I ask that you would continue and increase your grace in me until you have led me into full communion with your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, that I may see his beautiful and great glory.*

*And as I laid down in sleep and rose this morning only by your grace, keep me in a joyful, lively remembrance that whatever happens, I will someday know my final rising—the resurrection—because Jesus Christ laid down in death for me, and rose for my justification.*

*In Jesus's name.<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Keller, Tim, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/tim-keller-prays-ceasing/>



## DAY ONE

This week we're going to study some New Testament passages to see what they teach us about *personal prayer*. We'll observe the context, note what people prayed for, how they prayed, and the purpose of their prayers.

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each. *(We've filled out the first column as an example)*

	<b>Luke 1:5-20</b>	<b>Luke 2:36-38</b> (Read Luke 2:22-40 for more context)
<b>Setting:</b> <b>Who is praying?</b> <b>Where are they?</b> <b>Any time references?</b>	<i>Time: In the days of Herod Who: Zechariah, a priest Where: in the temple, by the altar of incense</i>	
<b>Context:</b> <b>What happens before and/or after the prayer?</b>	<i>Zechariah is chosen by lot to go into the temple. An angel appears and tells him that his prayer has been heard!</i>	
<b>What details are given about how the person prays? Any attitudes, actions, emotions described?</b>	<i>No details are given about how he prays - it just says that he &amp; his wife were righteous and blameless.  He doubts the words of the angel (v 18)</i>	
<b>Does the passage say what was prayed for? What do the setting, context, and details suggest might have been the content or purpose of the prayer?</b>	<i>He must have been praying for a son, because that is what the angel promises him.</i>	

What do these passages teach about God's timing, purposes, and sovereignty?

Can you think of any prayers you've prayed for a long time? What do these stories assure you of?

## D A Y T W O

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each.

	Mark 1:29-39	Luke 5:15-16 (Read 5:12-26 for more context)
<b>Setting:</b> Where is this story taking place? Any time references? Who prays?		
<b>Context:</b> What happens before and/or after the prayer?		
<b>What details are given about <i>how</i> the person prays? Any attitudes, actions, emotions described?</b>		
<b>Does the passage say <i>what</i> was prayed for? What do the setting, context, and details suggest might have been the content or purpose of the prayer?</b>		

What do these passages teach you about the purpose and importance of prayer?

Jesus prayed a lot, even during His busy times of ministry. Do you need to spend some time with God in order to be rejuvenated/strengthened for tasks that are ahead of you? If so, how/when will you start prioritizing prayer in your life?

## D A Y T H R E E

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each.

	Matthew 26:30-46, Luke 22:39-44	Hebrews 5:7-10
<b>Setting:</b> Where is this story taking place? Any time references? Who prays?		
<b>Context:</b> What happens before and/or after the prayer?		
<b>What details are given about <i>how</i> the person prays? Any attitudes, actions, emotions described?</b>		
<b>Does the passage say <i>what</i> was prayed for? What do the setting, context, and details suggest might have been the content or purpose of the prayer?</b>		

What do these passages reveal about the proper attitude of prayer?

Why did the Father hear Jesus' prayers? (Hebrews 5:7)

Think about your own prayer life. Is it marked with reverence leading to obedience? Or something else? Is God calling you to more reverence? What would this look like?

## **D A Y   F O U R / F I V E**

### **Suggested Reading:**

If you have time this week, read through the following passages and ask the same questions as the charts above.

- Luke 6:12-16
- Matthew 14:1-21
- Luke 9:28-36
- Acts 16:16-31

What do these passages teach you about prayer? What insights have you gained? How will this impact the way you pray with and for others?

**OR: Watch or listen:** Secret Church 2019 - Prayer, Fasting, and the Pursuit of God (David Platt)  
- The Gospels: <https://radical.net/?session=session-6-the-gospels>

## *Lesson 4 Wrap Up*

### **This lesson's Big Ideas:**

- Personal prayer in the New Testament is not used to manipulate God, but to align yourself with God - to be strengthened by Him to do what is set before you.
- Personal prayer is marked by attitudes of reverence, not arrogance or assumption (same as OT personal prayers). There is no formula of events, but still a "formula" of attitude.

**How has this week's study challenged or encouraged you as you consider your own prayer life?**

**As you finish off this lesson, consider the following questions in your prayers.**



#### **A D O R A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I PRAISE God for?



#### **C O N F E S S I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what do I need to CONFESS  
or repent of?

#### **S U P P L I C A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I ASK God for?

# L E S S O N   F I V E

## *Models of Corporate and Intercessory Prayer in the New Testament*

Start each day this week in prayer. Use the following from *The Book of Common Prayer* if you want!

*You are God: we praise You;  
You are the Lord: we acclaim You;  
You are the eternal Father:  
All creation worships you.  
To You all angels, all the powers of heaven,  
Cherubim and Seraphim, sing in endless praise:  
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
The glorious company of apostles praise You.  
The noble fellowship of prophets praise You.  
The white-robed army of martyrs praise You.  
Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims You;  
Father, of majesty unbounded,  
and Your true and only Son, worthy of all worship,  
and the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.  
You, Christ, are the King of glory,  
the eternal Son of the Father.  
When You became man to set us free  
You did not shun the Virgin's womb.  
You overcame the sting of death  
and opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.  
You are seated at God's right hand in glory.  
We believe that You will come and be our judge.  
Come then, Lord, and help Your people,  
bought with the price of Your own blood,  
and bring us with your saints  
to glory everlasting.<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> From the *Book of Common Prayer*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/te-deum/>

## D A Y O N E

This week we're going to study some New Testament passages to see what they teach us about *corporate and intercessory prayer*. "Corporate" simply refers to prayers in a group and "intercessory" prayer is the act of praying on behalf of someone else. We'll observe how people addressed God and described Him, how they prayed, and what kinds of things they prayed for, as well as how God responded.

### Prayer in Narrative formats (Gospels & Acts)

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below, answering the questions for each.

	Acts 1:15-26	Acts 4:23-31
<b>Context: Who is praying? Where are they?</b>	<i>Peter and the other disciples. They are in the "Upper Room" in Jerusalem</i>	
<b>What inspired their prayer? What was happening in their lives?</b>	(Read Acts 1:1-14) <i>Jesus had risen and told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit. They were praying that God would help them decide who should replace Judas.</i>	(Read Acts 4:1-4,13-22)
<b>How do they address God? What are their attitudes, actions, and/or emotions?</b>	"Lord" <i>They pray with confidence that he knows everyone's hearts</i>	
<b>What do they pray for?</b>	<i>That the Lord will show them who to choose as a replacement.</i>	
<b>What happens as a result?</b>	<i>They cast lots and Matthias is chosen.</i>	

Did you notice that both these circumstances involved quotations from Old Testament passages? How are these passages connected to their prayers?

What is the importance of God's Word when it comes to prayer? How can this be further reflected in your own prayer life?

What else do these passages teach you about corporate prayer and how will it impact the way you pray with others?

## D A Y T W O

### (Gospels & Acts)

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each.

	<b>Luke 22:31-34</b>	<b>John 17</b> (focus on v.1 ,5, 11, 15, 17, 21, 26)
<b>Context: Who is praying? What are the circumstances surrounding the prayer?</b>		(Read John 13:1-5 for the setting)
<b>Who is prayed for?</b>		
<b>What is prayed for?</b>		
<b>What does the passage reveal about God?</b>		
<b>What does the passage reveal about people?</b>		

In these prayers we see Jesus interceding on behalf of others. What is the focus of His prayers and what does this teach you about what He views as most important?

What are the attitudes and emotions that you notice in these prayers?

What else have you learned about intercessory prayer from these passages and how will it impact the way you pray with and for others?



## D A Y T H R E E

### Prayer in Paul's Letters

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each.

	<b>Romans 1:8-12</b> (To the church in Rome)	<b>Ephesians 1:15-23</b> (To the church in Ephesus)	<b>Philippians 1:3-11</b> (To the church in Philippi)
<b>Why does Paul commend them?</b>			
<b>In what ways does Paul describe God and/or Jesus?</b>			
<b>What emotions or attitudes do you notice?</b>			
<b>What does Paul pray for?</b>			

How does Paul start all his prayers? What does this indicate about his attitude towards God and these churches?

What themes stand out in Paul's intercessory prayers for these churches? How would these prayers encourage the churches?

What else have you learned about intercessory prayer from these passages and how will it impact how you pray for others?

## **D A Y F O U R / F I V E**

### **Suggested Reading:**

If you have time this week, read through the following passages and ask the same questions as the charts above.

- Acts 12:1-17 (Day One Chart)
- Acts 13:1-3 (Day One Chart)
- Colossians 1:3-14 (Day Three Chart)
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4, 11-12 (Day Three Chart)

What do these passages teach you about prayer? What insights have you gained? How will this impact the way you pray with and for others?

**OR: Watch or listen:** Secret Church 2019 - Prayer, Fasting, and the Pursuit of God (David Platt)

- Session 7 - Acts: <https://radical.net/?session=session-7-acts>

## *Lesson 5 Wrap Up*

### **This lesson's big ideas:**

- Prayers in the New Testament are marked with confidence in God's faithfulness and ability to do what His Word says.
- Corporate/intercessory prayers are marked by praise, thanksgiving, and humility before God.
- Intercessory prayers are focused on faith, perseverance, and spiritual growth for the gospel to be proclaimed to the praise and glory of God. It's so interesting that Jesus and Paul don't pray for people to be protected from every bad circumstance, but rather they pray that people's faith and hope will be strengthened in the midst of every situation.

**How has this week's study challenged or encouraged you as you consider your own prayer life?**

**As you finish off this lesson, consider the following questions in your prayers.**



#### **A D O R A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I PRAISE God for?



#### **C O N F E S S I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what do I need to CONFESS  
or repent of?

#### **S U P P L I C A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I ASK God for?

# L E S S O N   S I X

## *Biblical Teaching on Prayer*

Start each day this week in prayer. Use the following from *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* if you want!

O Saviour of sinners,  
Your name is excellent,  
your glory high,  
your compassions unfailing,  
your condescension<sup>9</sup> wonderful,  
your mercy tender.  
I bless you for the discoveries, invitations, promises of the gospel  
for in them is pardon for rebels  
liberty for captives  
health for the sick  
salvation for the lost.  
I come to you in the beloved name of Jesus;  
re-impress your image upon my soul;  
Raise me above the smiles and frowns of the world,  
regarding it as a light thing to be judged by men;  
May your commendation be my only aim,  
your Word my one rule.  
Make me abhor that which grieves your Holy Spirit,  
to suspect consolations of a worldly nature,  
to shun a careless way of life,  
to reprove evil,  
to instruct with meekness those who oppose me,  
to be gentle and patient towards all men,  
to be not only professor but an example of the gospel,  
displaying in every relation, office, and condition  
its excellency, loveliness and advantages  
How little have I illustrated my principles and improved my privileges!  
How seldom I served my generation!  
How often have I injured and not recommended my Redeemer!  
How few are those blessed through me!  
In many things I have offended,  
in all come short of your glory!  
Pardon my iniquity, for it is great!<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> In this instance condescension does not a negative meaning but rather “voluntary descent from one's rank or dignity in relations with an inferior” - Merriam Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/condescension>

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Bennet, (adapted from) “Living for Jesus”, *The Valley of Vision*, page 104-105

## **D A Y   O N E**

This week we're looking at various passages throughout the Bible to see what they teach us about how and what to pray.

### **Old Testament Teaching**

Pause and pray. Read through the passages below. Summarize what each teaches about prayer.

**Proverbs 15:8 -**

**Proverbs 15:29 -**

**Proverbs 28:9 -**

- According to these Proverbs, what is required of us as we approach God in prayer?

**Isaiah 1:11-20**

- Note the contrasts in this passage. What causes God NOT to listen?
- What does He require of them instead?

**Isaiah 56:1-8**

- What does God require of His people? (v 1-2)
- What two groups of people are addressed in v 3?
  - What is required of them to enter the house of prayer? (v 4-7)

According to the above passages, what attitudes and actions do we need to “watch out for” and guard against in our times of prayer?

What attitudes and actions *should* accompany our prayers?

## D A Y T W O

### New Testament Teaching - Epistles

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each. *(An example is done for you)*

	<b>When/how often should we pray?</b>	<b>How should we pray?</b>	<b>What or why should we pray?</b>
<b>Ephesians 6:16-20</b>	<i>on all occasions, always keep on praying</i>	<i>in the Spirit</i>	<i>for all the Lord's people, that the gospel is made known, that disciples may declare it fearlessly</i>
<b>Romans 12:9-13</b>			
<b>Colossians 4:2-4</b>			
<b>1 Thessalonians 5:12-18</b>			
<b>Philippians 4:4-7</b>			

Are these the kind of things you pray for? Why or why not?

How have these passages challenged you to think differently about the purpose and posture of prayer?

## **D A Y   T H R E E**

### **New Testament Teaching - Epistles (cont)**

Pause and pray. Then read through and reflect on the passages below. Then read them again, answering the questions for each.

#### **Romans 8:26-28**

- Who accompanies us in our prayers?
- Why do we need Him?
- What is the goal of the intercession? (v 27)

#### **1 Corinthians 14:13-19**

- What is the goal of prayer within the context of church?

#### **1 Timothy 2:1-8**

- What kinds of prayers are mentioned?
- Who should we pray for?
  - Why?

#### **1 Timothy 5:3-6 (esp v 5)**

- What does the widow's prayer show about her?

How do the passages above challenge you or encourage you in your prayer life?

Looking at your notes from the past three days, do your prayers align with these attitudes, actions, requirements and requests? How might they need to change?

## D A Y F O U R / F I V E

### Suggested Reading:

As we seek to align our prayers with what the Bible teaches about prayer, one thing we can do is incorporate praying the Scriptures into our life. See Appendix 2 (page 54) for an article describing “12 Reasons You Should Pray Through Scripture” for more information and teaching on this discipline. If you have time this week, we suggest reading and praying through the following passages:

- Colossians 1 (see example below)
- Ephesians (see example below)

Example of a personal prayer through Colossians 1:

*1:1-2 Thank You, Father, for saving me. I pray that I will always be Your holy and faithful disciple in Christ Jesus, and that You, dear Father, will fill me with Your grace and peace...*

*1:11-12 I ask that You would strengthen me with Your limitless power, Lord Jesus, so that I will have great endurance and patience. May I always give You joy-filled thanks in every circumstance, for You, Lord, have qualified me to share in the inheritance of all believers in Your eternal kingdom of light.*

Example of an intercessory prayer through Ephesians:

*Eph. 1:17-19a I ask You, glorious God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that You give \_\_\_\_\_ (insert a person's name in the blank!) the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that he/she will know You better. I also pray that the eyes of \_\_\_\_\_'s heart may be enlightened in order that he/she will know the hope to which You have called him/her. I pray that \_\_\_\_\_ will know the riches of Your glorious inheritance and Your great power available to those who believe to which nothing can be compared.*

*Eph. 4:1-3 I ask You, Father, that by Your Spirit You would equip \_\_\_\_\_ to live a life worthy of Your calling. Empower him/her to be completely humble and gentle, and to be lovingly patient with each person, bearing with each one in love. Grant \_\_\_\_\_ the strength to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

**OR: Watch or listen:** Secret Church 2019 - Prayer, Fasting, and the Pursuit of God (David Platt)

- Session 4 - Wisdom Literature: <https://radical.net/?session=session-4-wisdom-literature>



## *Lesson 6 Wrap Up*

### **Concluding thoughts/Big Idea/This week's Takeaways:**

- God requires obedience and righteousness if we expect Him to hear our prayers. We cannot ask Him to listen to us while at the same time we are rejecting His laws and rebelling against Him.
- We are to pray constantly and consistently, for all people, believers and unbelievers.
- The Spirit partners with us as we pray, and intercedes for us!

**How has this week's study challenged or encouraged you as you consider your own prayer life?**

**As you finish off this lesson, consider the following questions in your prayers.**



#### **A D O R A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I PRAISE God for?



#### **C O N F E S S I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what do I need to CONFESS  
or repent of?

#### **S U P P L I C A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I ASK God for?

## L E S S O N   S E V E N

### *Biblical Teaching on Prayer (continued)*

Start each day this week in prayer. Use the following from Matthew Henry's *Method of Prayer* if you want!

*Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you or in comparison with you. When my flesh and my heart fail, Lord, be the strength of my heart and my portion forever, (Psalm 73:25-26) the chosen portion of my inheritance in the other world and of my cup in this; and then I will say that the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places, and that I have a beautiful inheritance. (Psalm 16:5-6)*

*Your name and remembrance are the desire of my soul; my soul yearns for you in the night, and my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. (Isaiah 26:8-9)*

*As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God; my soul thirsts for God, for the living God, (Psalm 42:1-2) who commands his steadfast love by day, and at night his song is with me; a prayer to the God of my life. (Psalm 42:8)*

*O that I may come hungering and thirsting after righteousness, (Matthew 5:6) for you fill the hungry with good things, but the rich you send away empty. (Luke 1:53)*

*O that my soul may thirst for you, and my flesh faint for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water; that I may see your power and glory, as I have looked upon you in the sanctuary. Your steadfast love is better than life; (Psalm 63:1-3) my soul will be satisfied with that as with fat and rich food, and then my mouth will praise you with joyful lips. (Psalm 63:5)<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew Henry, *Method for Prayer*,  
<https://www.matthewhenry.org/read/adoration/humbly-profess-the-desire-of-your-heart-for-god/>

# **D A Y    O N E**

## **New Testament Teaching - Narratives**

Pause and pray. Summarize what the following passages from the New Testament narratives teach about prayer:

**Matthew 6:5-7** - How should and shouldn't we pray?

**Matthew 26:41, Mark 14:38** - What does prayer protect us from?

- What attitude is required?

**Mark 11:25** - What should we be aware of when we pray?

### **Luke 18:1-8**

- What did Jesus teach His disciples regarding prayer through this parable? (v. 1)
- Why can we have this attitude? What will be the outcome of our prayers? (v. 7-8)
- Note: Is this passage teaching that if we persist in prayer God will eventually give us everything we ask for?
  - To answer, read Luke 17:20-37, and 18:7-8. What is the context?
  - So what is this passage specifically teaching about how and why we should pray?

### **Acts 10:1-8**

- Who is praying? How is his prayer described?

According to the above passages, what attitudes and actions do we need to “watch out for” and guard against in our times of prayer?

What attitudes and actions *should* accompany our prayers?

## **D A Y   T W O**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Pause and pray before starting today's study.

**Luke 11:1** *Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."*

When they asked, He answered! He taught us how to pray. Work through the prayer slowly. **Below each phrase, make notes on what each statement is teaching and the implications for your own prayer life.**

Matthew 6:9-13 – *"Pray then like this:*  
*OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN*

*HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME.*

*YOUR KINGDOM COME,*

*YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.*

*GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD,*

*AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS.*

*AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION,*

*BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL*

Spend time today praying through the Lord's Prayer - See Appendix 1 (page 52)? for more help

## D A Y   T H R E E

### New Testament Teaching

Pause and pray before starting today's study.

As we wrap up the New Testament's teaching on prayer, read Revelation 5:6-8 and 8:3-5.

- How are prayers described here?
- What does this teach you about the value of your prayers?
- How does this passage affect the way you think about prayer and prioritize it?

**Looking at your answers on the preceding pages (past two weeks), answer the following questions:**

- What is the attitude that should accompany our prayers?
- What kinds of things do Jesus and Paul teach us to pray for?
- Are these the kind of things you pray for? Why or why not?
- From what you have studied, is there a set formula for prayer? What seems to be important?
- Has this study challenged you to think differently about the purpose and posture of prayer?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 states, *"All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**"* This verse reminds us that the word of God will equip us to do every good work that God requires of us. The Bible is a sufficient guide for outlining all of our spiritual disciplines. We do not need to look elsewhere for direction.

Think about the ways in which you pray. Which of your "prayer practices" are taught in the Bible and which are not?

## **D A Y   F O U R / F I V E**

### **Suggested Reading:**

Read through the following Psalms and notice the attitudes and actions that are evident. What is the Psalmist praising God for? Is he confessing anything? What is he asking for? Then use these Psalms to pray for yourself and others.

- Psalm 32
- Psalm 96
- Psalm 139
- Psalm 142

What insights have you gained from these Psalms? How can you incorporate the Psalms more into your prayers, both personal and corporate?

**OR: Watch or listen:** Secret Church 2019 - Prayer, Fasting, and the Pursuit of God (David Platt)

- Session 8 - Letters from Paul: <https://radical.net/?session=session-8-letters-from-paul>

## *Lesson 7 Wrap Up*

### **Concluding thoughts/Big Idea/This week's Takeaways:**

- The Bible does not present a mandatory “formula” for effective prayer. (The only prayer “formula” in scripture is the Lord’s Prayer). All other prayer is done at random times & places & postures & emotions .... there is no “right way” to pray - there is only a “right attitude,” humility and reverence before God. We don’t want to think there is a “magic formula” for prayer that we have to follow that isn’t taught in the Bible.
- We need to watch out for attitudes of hypocrisy, pride, disobedience and unforgiveness as we pray. We must approach God in humility and with repentant hearts.

**How has this week’s study challenged or encouraged you as you consider your own prayer life?**

**As you finish off this lesson, consider the following questions in your prayers.**



#### **A D O R A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I PRAISE God for?



#### **C O N F E S S I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what do I need to CONFESS  
or repent of?

#### **S U P P L I C A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I ASK God for?

# L E S S O N   E I G H T

## *Specific Issues and Challenges Related to Prayer*

Start each day this week in prayer. Use the following from *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* if you want!

*Blessed God,  
Ten thousand snares are mine without and within,  
defend me;*

*When sloth and indolence seize me,  
give me views of heaven;*

*When sinner entice me,  
give me disrelish of their ways;*

*When sensual pleasures tempt me,  
purify and refine me;*

*When I desire worldly possessions,  
help me to be rich toward thee;*

*When the vanities of the world ensnare me,  
let me not plunge into new guilt and ruin.*

*May I remember the dignity of my spiritual release,  
never be too busy to attend to my soul,  
never be so engrossed with time  
that I neglect the things of eternity;  
thus may I not only live, but grow towards you.*

*Form my mind to right notions of religion,  
that I may not judge of grace by wrong conceptions,  
nor measure my spiritual advances by the efforts of my natural being.*

*May I seek after an increase of divine love to you,  
after unreserved resignation to your will,  
after extensive benevolence to my fellow creatures,  
after patience and fortitude of soul,  
after a heavenly disposition  
after a concern that I may please you in public and private.*

*Draw on my soul the lineaments of Christ  
in every trace and feature of which you will take delight for I am  
your workmanship, created in Christ Jesus,  
your letter written with the Holy Spirit's pen,  
your tilled soil ready for sowing, then harvest.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur Bennet, (adapted from) "A Christian's Prayer", *The Valley of Vision*, page 108-109



## D A Y O N E

This week we're going to address some ways that prayer has been taught incorrectly. You may or may not have interacted with these teachings before. The goal through this study is that you will be able to examine the context of certain verses that have been used incorrectly and discern their meaning so that you are basing your prayer habits and understanding from a correct understanding of Scripture.

Pause and pray before starting today's study.

**John 10:27** "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (NIV)

This verse is often used as a "proof text" for Listening Prayer Ministry.<sup>13</sup> People employ this verse to encourage others that Jesus speaks to His people, giving them specific personal direction and guidance when they seek Him in prayer. Let's examine this passage to determine its context and its overall message.

**Read through John 9.** What is the conflict(s) that directly precedes Jesus' teaching in John 10?

- What question does Jesus ask at the end of the conflict? (John 9:35)
- According to John 9:40, who is Jesus speaking to in the first part of John 10:1-21?

**Read John 10:1-21.** If you had to summarize what Jesus is telling his audience (identified above) in this first part of John 10, what would you say? (look particularly at v 7-10, 11, 14-19)

**Read John 10:22-40.** What is the main issue in this portion of Scripture? (Note: what word is repeated in v 24-26, v 37-38, v 42)

So, in summary: is this passage focused on *how to pray*, or on something else?

You have observed that this "proof text" cannot be used to defend Listening Prayer. It is teaching that Jesus is the Messiah and those that have "eyes and ears" opened will understand and believe in Him for salvation. Proponents of Listening Prayer often suggest clearing your mind, listening to your thoughts, and using your imagination to hear from Jesus. But Scripture tells us to fill our minds with the Scripture and to meditate on it day and night (Psalm 1:1-3, Psalm 119). Pick a stanza from Psalm 119 to meditate on today.

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<sup>13</sup> Listening prayer is a prayer posture in which you attempt to still and clear your mind in order to hear God's voice directly speaking to you. It often involves engaging your imagination to picture yourself meeting and talking with Jesus. See Appendix 3 (page 55) for more information.

## D A Y T W O

Pause and pray before starting today's study.

**Matthew 18:19:** "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." (NIV)

This verse is often used in corporate prayer as a call to "agreement," with the idea that if we join with other like-minded people and "agree" about an idea or outcome, God will be more inclined to act on our behalf. Let's examine this passage a bit to determine its context and its overall message.

**Read Matthew 18:1-19.**

- Who is Jesus talking to throughout this passage?
- What is the main theme of the first 14 verses? (v 6, v 7 - 9, v 10, v 14)
- What is the main theme of verses 15 - 19?
- Within this context framework, what do think the people are "agreeing" on in verse 19?
- Based on the context, how would you explain the meaning of this verse?

The idea that we could manipulate God in any way into giving us what we want is nowhere in Scripture. We often treat prayer like it is mostly about us and what we need. But from the examples of Scripture we have seen that righteous people first exalt and praise God in prayer, confess their sins, and then humbly bring their requests to Him. Instead of asking for our own desires, in Scripture, we find repeated affirmation that when we align ourselves to His Will, He will hear and answer.

**Read 1 John 5:14-15 and John 15:7-10** and notice the conditions for answered prayer.

- What conditions apply for answered prayer?
- What do these conditions tell you about the relationship God desires with us?
- How will these passages affect the way you pray and the things you pray for?

## D A Y   T H R E E

Pause and pray before starting today's study.

**Isaiah 55:11** "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

This verse has been used in the Word of Faith<sup>14</sup> movement, in which people believe that what we say in our prayers or speech can be used to manipulate the world and actually create the blessings we speak out. Let's study this passage in context and see what the text really means.

### Read Isaiah 55.

- What are God's words in this passage - what actions does He speak? (v. 1-3, 6-7)
  - ex. "Come all you who are thirsty"
  
- What are God's "words" of this passage related to? (Do they have to do with health, wealth, and other blessings or something else?)
  
- What analogy is used in verse 10?
  
- How is this analogy connected to verse 11?
  - Who sends the rain and snow?
  
  - Who sends God's Words?
  
  - Who's desires are being accomplished?

So this passage is not to be used to prove that we have control, but rather to affirm God's sovereignty over all things. We should use prayer to conform our minds to His, not to manipulate Him or the world around us.

**Read Ephesians 1:3-14.** Praise God for His powerful Word that accomplishes His will - which includes our salvation, according to His desire, plan, and purpose!

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<sup>14</sup> "At the heart of the Word of Faith movement is the belief in the "force of faith." It is believed words can be used to manipulate the faith-force, and thus actually create what they believe Scripture promises (health and wealth). Laws supposedly governing the faith-force are said to operate independently of God's sovereign will and that God Himself is subject to these laws. This is nothing short of idolatry, turning our faith—and by extension ourselves—into god." (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Word-Faith.html>)

## **D A Y   F O U R / F I V E**

### **Suggested Reading:**

Instead of using prayer to focus on ourselves or to manipulate God, use prayer to worship God, to draw near to Him, and to align yourself with God's will. Use the following passages to spend time doing that over the next two days.

- Adoration: Psalm 101
  - As you pray through this Psalm, personalize your praise and awe of God, remarking on what He has done this past year or the evidence of His hand in creation around you.
- Confession: Psalm 51
  - Slow down as you pray through this Psalm. As God reveals your sin, confess it and praise Him for His forgiveness.
- Supplication: Ephesians 3:14-19
  - What things does Paul pray for? Why? Pray this passage for yourself or someone else.

**OR: Watch or listen:** Secret Church 2019 - Prayer, Fasting, and the Pursuit of God (David Platt)

- Session 9 - Letters from Others: <https://radical.net/?session=session-9-letters-from-others>

## *Lesson 8 Wrap Up*

### **This week's big ideas:**

- Always study a verse in its context to determine if it is being used correctly.
- Be wary of any formula or prayer ministry that turns the focus of prayer to ourselves instead of to God.
- Prayer is not about manipulating God, but aligning ourselves to His will and seeking His glory.

**How has this week's study challenged or encouraged you as you consider your own prayer life?**

**As you finish off this lesson, consider the following questions in your prayers.**



#### **A D O R A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I PRAISE God for?



#### **C O N F E S S I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what do I need to CONFESS  
or repent of?

#### **S U P P L I C A T I O N**

In light of this passage/lesson,  
what can I ASK God for?

# ***APPENDIX 1 - Ideas for Practicing Prayer***

## ***Praying Throughout the Day***

- Set your timer for 10-15 minutes as you work around the home and pray until the timer goes off. If you can, try to divide your time between Adoration, Confession and Supplication.
- Go for a walk in your neighbourhood and pray for the people in each home or business or school that you pass.
- Go for a walk in your neighbourhood and thank God for the things that you see - nature / people / facilities (thank God for the Abbotsford hospital if you walk past it etc.).
- Pray as you drive or exercise rather than listening to the radio or your phone, or pray for the first 10-15 minutes of a drive / exercise routine and then listen to the radio / phone :-).
- Put a sticky note in your car to remind you to pray for certain things or certain people each day as you drive.
  - Eg - Monday - pray for your immediate family, Tuesday - pray for your siblings and their families, Wednesday - pray for your co-workers etc.
- As you are driving your kids to and from school or activities, or with your spouse, or friends, take turns praying out loud together for the situations and challenges you will be facing. Take turns thanking God for how he is at work in each situation and challenge.
- Set your phone or watch to chime each hour, and quickly pray for whatever is on your mind each time you hear the chime.

## ***Praying During 'Quiet Times' or Devotional Time'***

### **Pray through Scripture (15-20 minutes per day)**

- You can do this in any book of the Bible, but it might be best to work through the Psalms OR through the New Testament letters (Romans > Jude in your New Testament. If you start with some of the shorter letters like Colossians, Ephesians etc. it might be easier than starting with Romans and 1 or 2 Corinthians)
- How?
  - Work through a book of the Bible, paragraph by paragraph.
  - Write out a paragraph each day.
  - Summarize what it is teaching.
  - Adoration - write down what you can praise God for, based on this text.
  - Confession - write down what you need to confess, based on this text.
  - Supplication - write down what you can ask God for, based on this text.
    - Pray these ideas to God after you write them down.
- Why paragraph by paragraph?
  - Because translators have organized the bible using paragraphs to show the flow of the author's thoughts. Paragraphs generally encapsulate one full idea so if you work through books systematically like this you will begin to see the big ideas the author of each book wants you to understand.

## Pray through the Lord's Prayer - Matthew 6:9-13 (10 - 15 minutes)

- Read or recite each idea from the Lord's prayer, and then "personalize" it.
- How?
  - ***Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.***
    - Praise God for who He is / that He is in heaven.
    - Ask that He help you to represent him well as you walk through the day, so that his name would be "hallowed" - people wouldn't think badly of God because of how you live your life.
    - Ask that his kingdom come & his will be done - reflect on the situations you are facing personally (troubles in your family or at work etc.) or in the world or community (a tragedy on the news etc), and ask that His will would be done in this situation, that He would show himself to be sovereign over this situation & would bring good from it etc.
  - ***Give us this day our daily bread***
    - Ask God for what you need to make it through today (not tomorrow or this week or this month). Ask for finances or strength or wisdom or energy or whatever it is you need.
  - ***And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.***
    - Ask God to forgive you for ways that you may have offended him or others.
    - Ask him to help you to forgive others for the ways that they may have offended you.
    - Ask God to protect you from temptation/your own sinful desires & the ways that you regularly "blow it" :- ) - we all have these pieces in our lives.

## Pray a Psalm based on the day of the month.

- Read a few psalms based on the day of the month, decide which one speaks mostly into your frame of mind/concerns of the day for your family etc., and then read and pray pieces of this Psalm. An "organized way" to approach this is as follows:
  - Read the Psalm which corresponds to the day of the month.
    - On August 23, read Psalm 23.
  - If that Psalm doesn't particularly resonate with you, add "30" to the number.
    - Read Psalm 53
  - Keep adding 30 until you run out of Psalms
    - Read Psalm 83
    - Read Psalm 113
    - Read Psalm 143
- Choose one of these psalms and pray to God or praise God based on the ideas the Psalmist is using to pray or praise God.

## ***APPENDIX 2 - 12 Reasons You Should Pray Scripture***

Article by Andrew David Nasseli

I don't want to give the impression that I'm a prayer-expert. I'm not. But that's one reason I find praying Scripture so helpful (more on that later).

My argument is simple: *You should pray Scripture.*

Three qualifications:

1. I don't mean merely that you should pray. That's a given.
2. I don't mean that you should merely pray scripturally *informed* prayers. That's also a given. I'm arguing specifically that you should pray Scripture itself.
3. I'm not arguing that you should pray *only* Scripture every time you pray. Rather, I'm arguing that you should pray Scripture itself often.

So why should you pray Scripture? For at least twelve reasons:

1. You should pray Scripture because God's people in the OT and NT did...
2. You should pray Scripture because Jesus did...
3. You should pray Scripture because it glorifies God the Father...
4. You should pray Scripture because it helps you focus on what is most important...
5. You should pray Scripture because it helps you focus on praying...
6. You should pray Scripture because it is entirely truthful...
7. You should pray Scripture because it helps you pray confidently...
8. You should pray Scripture because it kindles your affections...
9. You should pray Scripture because it helps you express yourself appropriately...
10. You should pray Scripture because it keeps your prayers fresh and specific...
11. You should pray Scripture because it keeps your prayers in scriptural proportion...
12. You should pray Scripture because it helps you understand Scripture better...

*Read the full article in which the author expands on each point and gives some strategies for getting started at (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/12-reasons-you-should-pray-scripture/>)*



## ***APPENDIX 3 - Listening Prayer***

### **Some concerns and cautions about the “Listening Prayer” Approach to Prayer Ministry**

#### ***“Proof Text” for Listening Prayer ministry***

Jesus’s specific teaching on prayer is located primarily in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. His most intimate recorded prayer is found in John 17. Listening Prayer ministries often employ John 10:14-16 as the “proof text” for prayer ministry. Jesus in this passage is indicating that he speaks to his sheep and they know His voice. When read in context, this verse is not talking directly about prayer but rather about the process of salvation. Jesus is saying that he is the gate – the way to salvation. People who enter through him, instead of following the teaching of the “thieves and robbers” will be saved. Those who are truly His will listen to His voice (His teaching), rather than to the teaching of those who oppose Him. His words are not aimed at teaching people to pray, but rather outline how committed He is to saving people.

We would affirm that Jesus does speak to people individually through His word and through impressions from the Holy Spirit, but would draw on other texts to affirm this truth.

#### ***“Formula” for Listening Prayer ministry***

God spoke to people throughout scripture as they were simply going about their daily lives – tending sheep (Moses in Exodus 3), threshing wheat (Gideon in Judges 6), and walking along the road (Luke 24). While we have references to people withdrawing to pray, and being met by God in this situation (Acts 10), a formula for hearing God’s voice is not specifically taught. What we are taught, however, is to meditate upon scripture: (Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:1-3, Psalm 119 and others).

The Listening Prayer “formula” has been outlined as follows: 1) Quiet yourself 2) Listen to the voices, thoughts, images within yourself 3) Discern between the voices - identify those which sound like the voice of the Holy Spirit, and those which don't (voices are distinguished by emotions attached to the thoughts - eg. do they bring up anger / fear / negative thoughts etc), 4) journal what you believe the Holy Spirit is telling you 5) validate and sift this through scriptural teaching.

We would suggest that the "formula" begin rather than end with scripture; that prayer ministers would encourage people to actively meditate on scripture – ask questions of it, pray through it and, and from that, listen to what the Holy Spirit may be speaking and saying through His word, rather than listening to inner thoughts first. It is our concern that people can get attached to the thoughts which "feel right", and look for scripture that may validate these thoughts, rather than having scripture shape our thoughts and worldview, and live in obedience to it.

There are several “formulae” found in scripture - when God wants us to do something in a specific way (eg. communion, baptism, preaching) he tells us how it is to be done. Scripture does not teach us to pray in the manner taught by many listening prayer advocates.

## *Priority of the Bible*

The Holy Spirit is the author of scripture. It is our hope that people would develop a deep hunger for the word of God already given, and not lose sight of this in the search for a "special word" from God. We do not want people to neglect Bible Study in order to pursue finding their own individual message. As Paul wrote to the church in Colossae, he was writing to correct their emphasis: they were seeking new and unique personal experiences instead of the gospel message. One of the main themes of this letter is Paul's encouragement to rather focus on Christ, and on living in a way that honors and glorifies him.

## *Open-Hand Attitude towards "subjective" messages received that do not originate in scripture*

It is not uncommon for people to believe they have received a message from God for the church or for an individual. This should be handled with caution and a message should not be imposed upon anyone. Both individuals and groups receiving messages from others are encouraged to test everything and hold onto the good (1 Thessalonians 5: 19-21). If a message is passed on to church leadership, the appropriate people will pray about it and attempt to discern if it is a word that they feel is meant for the church. We believe that God is sovereign over every situation, and will direct the greater body within the church if it is accord with His will.

## *Listening Prayer and Prophetic Gifting*

We affirm that some people have gifts of discernment and prophecy which might involve receiving words / images / ideas / promptings from the Holy Spirit, but like every spiritual gift, not every Christian is gifted in the same way. Systematizing prayer or training people to hear a special, individual word from God could taint our perception of this gifting, because it builds in the assumption that all will and should hear from God in the same way if they are "real" Christians. It could potentially bring in a level of legalism which isn't in line with scriptural teaching, and could cause people to invent stories of what they see or perceive in order to please others or validate their own spirituality.

## ***APPENDIX 4 - Recommended Resources***

### **Books and websites:**

Bennett, Arthur G. The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions.  
Carson, DA. Praying with Paul: A Guide to Spiritual Reformation.  
Henry, Matthew. A Way to Pray - [www.matthewhenry.org](http://www.matthewhenry.org)  
Keller, Tim. Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God.  
Keller, Tim and Kathy Keller. The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Psalms.  
Packer, JI and Carolyn Nystrom. Praying: Finding Our Way Through Duty to Delight.  
Whitney, Donald S. Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life.  
Whitney, Donald S. Praying the Bible.

### **Prayer Booklet:**

St. John's Vancouver: <https://www.stjohnsvancouver.org/2021-common-prayer-booklet>

### **Video/Podcast: Secret Church 2019: Prayer, Fasting, and the Pursuit of God.**

[https://radical.net/secret\\_church/secret-church-19-prayer-fasting-and-the-pursuit-of-god/](https://radical.net/secret_church/secret-church-19-prayer-fasting-and-the-pursuit-of-god/)

### **Video resource - 2016 Women's Gospel Coalition Conference Pre-Conference Teaching**

Tim Keller - <http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/prayer-in-the-psalms>

Kathy Keller - <http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/a-word-from-a-mule-psalm-32-9>

Tim & Kathy Q & A - <http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/q-a-on-prayer>

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