



PRAYER

“...lifting up holy hands every place to pray...” (1 Timothy 2:8)

Self-Study Workbook

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Table of Contents

- 1 Commanded by God
- 2 Frequency and Location
- 3 Types of Prayers
- 4 Attitudes in Prayer
- 5 The Power of prayer
- 6 Jesus' Prayer
- 7 Challenging Prayer Passages

Introduction

This workbook has been put together to help encourage you to grow in the discipline of prayer. Perhaps we do not pray as we ought because we do not know what we are to pray about, nor know how to pray. However, prayer was important to Jesus, the apostles, and the first century Christians. Therefore, many of us have much room to grow in our dependency on prayer. As you approach this study, consider areas in your prayer life that are lacking and ways you can improve in this discipline.

Commanded by God

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

- 1 How does one pray like the hypocrites? Why is this hypocrisy? How can we avoid these traps?
- 2 How does one pray like the Gentiles? Why is this useless? How can we avoid these traps?
- 3 Break down the prayer that Jesus teaches. What are we to pray for? What is the order of the subjects in the prayer?
- 4 What does forgiveness have to do with prayer?
- 5 Explain the circumstances around which Jesus admonished Peter to “stay awake and pray.”
- 6 What do we learn about how we ought to use prayer? How will prayer help us with temptations?

KEY TEXTS

Matthew 6:5-15

5 “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

7 “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (ESV)

Matthew 26:40-41

40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (ESV)

7 What does prayer have to do with loving your enemy? How will prayer help you? What should we pray for concerning our enemies and persecutors?

8 Explain the connection to prayer and evangelism.

9 What did Jesus see and feel which caused him to command His disciples to pray for workers?

10 Can we be an answer to this prayer? How?

11 How does prayer take care of worrying? Why is this our solution?

Matthew 5:43-48

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (ESV)

Matthew 9:35-38

35 And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (ESV)

2 Thessalonians 3:1-3

1 Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, 2 and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. (ESV)

Philippians 4:6-7

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (ESV)

Frequency and Location

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

- 1 How does this parable teach us to continue in prayer?
- 2 Is God to be considered like the unjust judge? What is the point about prayer? What is the point about God?
- 3 How do we “pray without ceasing” and “constant in prayer?” What does this look like?
- 4 Describe the ways Paul describes we ought to pray:

KEY TEXTS

Luke 18:1-8

1 And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. 2 He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. 3 And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ 4 For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’” 6 And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7 And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 8 I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (ESV)

1 Thessalonians 5:14-18

14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. 15 See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (ESV)

Romans 12:11-13

11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. (ESV)

Ephesians 6:18

18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (ESV)

5 Describe the ways Paul describes we ought to pray:

6 What do we learn from the example of Jesus concerning the frequency and location of prayer? How can we do this?

7 What did Paul teach about the frequency and location of prayer?

8 What do we learn about the frequency and location of prayer from the first century Christians?

9 Are we meeting the standard left by Jesus, the apostles, and first century disciples? What are ways that we can improve our prayer life?

Colossians 4:2-4

2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. (ESV)

Luke 6:12

In these days he [Jesus] went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. (ESV)

Matthew 14:23

And after he [Jesus] had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. (ESV)

1 Timothy 2:8

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; (ESV)

Acts 2:42

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (ESV)

Attitudes In Prayer

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

- 1 What do we learn about how to pray and attitudes in prayer from Jesus' parable?
- 2 How can we make sure we have this attitude before entering into prayer?
- 3 What do we learn about prayer from the withered fig tree? (note that Jesus is speaking to the apostles)
- 4 How can we make sure we have this attitude before entering into prayer?

KEY TEXTS

Luke 18:9-14

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (ESV)

Mark 11:20-26

20 As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. 21 And Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." 22 And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. 23 Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." (ESV)

5 What else can we receive from the Lord if we will simply ask?

6 What are the ways we are to ask? How do we fulfill what James has commanded?

7 How do we reconcile the words of John with the fact that we can receive a “no” answer from God?

8 What is Jesus trying to teach to His disciples concerning prayer?

James 1:5-8

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (ESV)

James 4:1-3

1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. (ESV)

1 John 5:13-15

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. (ESV)

Matthew 7:7-11

7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (ESV)

The Power of Prayer

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

- 1 What was lacking in the disciples that prevented them from doing the work of God?
- 2 What were the disciples to do to be more effective workers for Jesus?
- 3 What do we learn about how to pray?
- 4 How powerful is prayer according to James?
- 5 What do we learn from Elijah concerning prayer?
- 6 What does Paul tell us is possible through prayer?

KEY TEXTS

Luke 11:1-13

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." 2 And he said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread, 4 and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'" 5 And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, 6 for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 7 and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? 8 I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. 9 And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (ESV)

James 5:16-18

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. (ESV)

Ephesians 3:20-21

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (NKJV)

Jesus' Prayer

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

- 1 What was Jesus' prayer for all those who believe in Him?
- 2 Looking at your answer from question 1, can this be accomplished? How can it be accomplished?
- 3 According to verse 23, what is our purpose as believers in Him?
- 4 According to verse 24, what did Christ want us to see? What does this mean?
- 5 Read the first part of Jesus' prayer in John 17. Verses 1-5 records Jesus speaking to the Father. What does Jesus request?
- 6 John 17:6-19 records Jesus praying for His apostles. What does Jesus request?

KEY TEXTS

John 17:20-26

20 "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." (ESV)

Challenging Prayer Passages

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

- 1 What questions do you have from the Romans text?
- 2 Without necessarily going into the “how”, write down what is happening on our behalf and why.
- 3 Explain what the elders of the church are doing concerning prayer.
- 4 Under what situations are we not to pray? What does this mean? Why would we not pray then?

KEY TEXTS

Romans 8:26-28

26 Likewise the spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

James 5:14-15

14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (ESV)

1 John 5:16-17

16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. 17 All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death. (ESV)