

Prayer



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

A Self-study Guide

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Introduction

This booklet 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 heathen? 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) Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. I assure you: They have their reward! (6) But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (7) And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

(8) “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. (9) In this manner, therefore, pray:

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 forgive our debtors.

(13) And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

(14) “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

(15) But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 26:40-41

(40) Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He asked Peter. “So, couldn’t you stay awake with Me one hour?”

(41) Stay awake and pray, so that you won’t enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

7 What does prayer have to do with loving your enemy?

Mathew 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, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

(45) that you may be sons of your Father 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 have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

(47) And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

(48) Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

8 Explain the connection to prayer and evangelism.

Mathew 9:35-38

(35) Then Jesus went to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness.

(36) When He saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd.

(37) Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few.

(38) Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

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

2 Thessalonians 3:1

Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.

10 Can we be an answer to this prayer?

Philippians 4:6

Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

11 How does prayer take care of worrying?

5 What do we learn from the example of Jesus concerning the frequency and location of prayer?

Luke 6:12

During those days He went out to the mountain to pray and spent all night in prayer to God.

Matthew 14:23

After dismissing the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone.

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

1 Timothy 2:8

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

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

Acts 2:42

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

8 Are we meeting the standard left by Jesus, the apostles, and first century disciples?

Attitudes In Prayer

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

1 What do we learn about prayer from Jesus' parable?

2 What do we learn about prayer from the withered fig tree?

KEY TEXTS

Luke 18:9-14

(9) Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

(10) "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

(11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

(12) I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

(13) And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise 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, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Mark 11:20-26

(20) Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

(21) And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."

(22) So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God.

(23) For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

(24) Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

(25) "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

(26) But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

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

James 1:5-7

(5) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

(6) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

(7) For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

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

James 4:3

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

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

1 John 5:14-15

(14) Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

(15) And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

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

1 John 3:22

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

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 he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

(9) Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

(10) Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

(11) If you then, being 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!

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 How powerful is prayer according to James?
- 4 What do we learn from Elijah concerning prayer?
- 5 What does Paul tell us is possible through prayer?

KEY TEXTS

Matthew 17:14-21

- (14) And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying,
- (15) "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.
- (16) So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him."
- (17) Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me."
- (18) And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.
- (19) Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?"
- (20) So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.
- (21) However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

James 5:16-18

- (16) Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.
- (17) Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.
- (18) And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

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.

Jesus' Prayer

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

- 1 What was Jesus' prayer for all those who believe in Him?
- 2 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 If time permits, read the rest of Jesus' prayer. Verses 1-5 is Jesus speaking to the Father--discuss what Jesus requests. Verses 6-19 is Jesus praying for His apostles--discuss what Jesus requests.

KEY TEXTS

John 17:20-26

- (20) "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;
- (21) that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.
- (22) And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:
- (23) I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.
- (24) "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.
- (25) O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.
- (26) And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

