

A close-up photograph of a white marble relief sculpture. The sculpture depicts a person's head and hands in a prayerful pose. The person's eyes are closed, and their hands are pressed together in front of their face. The texture of the marble is visible, and the lighting creates soft shadows that emphasize the contours of the face and hands.

Prayer:

Finding the  
Pulse of God

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# PRAYER: IN RESPONSE TO OUR NEED



This Winter Bible Study is meant to be a topical Bible Study on Prayer. A topical study is different from the Inductive Bible Studies each semester in that we will be examining different texts in Scripture. Therefore, we are not focusing *only* on one specific text. Instead, a topical study requires searching all of Scripture – a task often requiring much time and effort. The main purpose is to obtain a comprehensive Scriptural view on the topic. While a topical study can be demanding, the insight gained can be rich and rewarding.

As we begin this study, we want to recognize our desperate need for God-honoring prayer in our lives. Charles Spurgeon once remarked that, “when a jeweler shows his best diamonds, he sets them against a black velvet backdrop. The contrast of the jewels against the dark velvet brings out the luster. In the same way, God does His most stunning work where things seem hopeless.” Unless we see the backdrop of our own sinful flesh and inadequacy, we will never see the radiant outworking of God’s glorious purposes through the diamond of prayer!

## **Make observations on the following verses:**

2 Peter 1:3-4 –

Ephesians 1:3 –

1 Corinthians 1:7 –

2 Corinthians 5:17 –

Romans 6:6-7,11 –

1. At the moment of belief in Christ for eternal life, what changed about you and what were you given?
2. Does your life always show this to be true? Why would a believer's life not always reflect these truths?

**Make observations on the following verses:**

Romans 7:15-25 –

Galatians 5:16-14 –

1 John 2:15-17 –

Romans 8:22-23 –

Ephesians 1:13-14 –

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 –

1. Who is John addressing in 1 John 2:15-17? How can we apply this?
2. What might be the cause of the struggle Paul depicts in the life of a believer? How is this struggle seen practically in a believer's life?



3. How do we reconcile this struggle with the fact that Paul previously declared believers to be “new creations in Christ” and “freed from sin”?

## APPLICATION

Hopefully, you have seen that dependence is vital, because the flesh wars against us and we will not be rid of its presence until we are in heaven. It is this truth that should drive us to our knees daily as we cry out for help and deliverance.

In his book *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, Jim Cymbala passionately lays out a vision for our need for prayer. Pastoring a church in inner city Brooklyn with no financial support or personal ministry experience, he watched the Lord sovereignly transform the lives of countless prostitutes, drug dealers, and even his own daughter as the congregation grew from 20 to thousands all through the desperate cry of a people in prayer. His vision for a prayer-saturated church to model the early church in Acts can be seen through his words relayed to his congregation, “Brothers and sisters, I really feel that I’ve heard from God about the future of our church. While I was away, I was calling out to God to help us – to help *me* – understand what He wants most from us. And I believe I’ve heard an answer. It’s not fancy or profound or spectacular. But I want to say to you today with all the seriousness I can muster: From this day on, the prayer meeting will be the barometer of our church. What happens on Tuesday night will be the gauge by which we will judge success or failure because that will be the measure by which God blesses us. This is the engine that will drive the church.”

This powerful story adequately portrays God’s sovereign ability to move through prayer as His people make it a priority. This principle is seen all the way from Genesis to Revelation as God responds to the prayers and petitions of His people!

### Over the course of the next week, commit to doing the following:

- ⌘ Spend some time asking God to reveal more fully the depravity of your flesh and those areas of your life that are not submitted to the Spirit.
- ⌘ Ask God to deeply convict you of your desperate need to depend on Him more through prayer.
- ⌘ Ask God to prepare your heart to be receptive to Christ’s teachings on prayer in the weeks to come.
- ⌘ Begin keeping a prayer journal of those things that you have been praying for. In addition, take time to praise the Lord for those things He answered.

# ⊕ LESSON 1

# P R A Y E R : A C C O R D I N G T O C H R I S T



We have already established that in our humanity we are weak and therefore in need of dependence upon God, but it seems that we are primarily given to prayer in our desperate times of need. A great modern-day example of this is the resurgence of prayer we've seen since the attacks on September 11 – prayers for our country, our government, and the world. This is good, but as children of God, why don't we cry out to Him daily when there is no apparent crisis? Why don't we see the urgency and daily need for prayerful dependence upon our Creator? Has self-sufficiency infected the hearts of us as believers as it has the rest of the world? Have we forgotten the wretched state from which we have been redeemed? Do we really think we can overcome our own flesh or the darkness of sin that surrounds us without the help of God? Our answer to all of these should emphatically be "NO!" However, prayer often gets pushed to the bottom of our priority lists, as our own agendas take precedence. As believers, we ought to have the same perspective on prayer as Martin Luther - "I have so much to do today, I must spend the first three hours in prayer." More than this, we should follow Paul's instructions to pray without ceasing!

Christ's view on prayer certainly outweighs anyone's, and we see His emphasis on the subject played out in His life as He continually communes with His heavenly Father. Here was God in human flesh, yet He still cried out for help and depended upon the Father. Unfortunately, this attribute of Christ is often overlooked, and the outcome is that we fail to follow His perfect example of constant and dependent prayer. In order to be more Christ-like, it is appropriate for us to look at His example and what He has to say concerning prayer. No greater authoritative instruction on prayer exists than that of the author of Christianity Himself!

**Let's take a look at probably the most famous and noteworthy instruction on prayer from the very words of Christ – The Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:5-14 (cross reference with Luke 11:1-13). Record any significant observations.**

**Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.**

1. Why is it so significant that Christ begins His prayer in this manner?
2. How do we approach God when we come before Him in prayer?
3. Where should we picture ourselves mentally as we pray? (Hebrews 4:16; 9:24)

**Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.**

1. What is the kingdom that Christ prayed would come to earth? (Revelation 19:11-16, 20:1-6)
2. Why is it significant that Christ prayed for this kingdom before his daily needs? (Matt. 6:31-34)

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

1. How can we know what our real needs are? (Matthew 6:8, 10, 19-20, 7:7-11; Philippians 4:12, 19; 1 Peter 5:7)
2. What attitude should we have when we come before God asking Him to give us our needs? (Matthew 21:21-22; Mark 11:23-24; Luke 18:1-4)
3. What does it mean to ask for something “in Jesus” name? (Matthew 6:10; John 6:38-40, 14:13-14, 17:1-26)

4. Notice the passage says “our” needs. Who else should we pray for and what should we pray for them? (Matthew 5:44-45; John 17)
5. Do you ever feel like you’re nagging God with your requests? How long should we continue to pray for something or someone? (Luke 11:5-10, 18:1-8)

### **And forgive us our debts,**

1. Since we as believers have been forgiven in an eternal sense (Colossians 1:13-14), why do we still need to pray and ask God for forgiveness? (1 John 1:3-9; Isaiah 59:1-2; Psalm 32:1-7)
2. What is the value of confession of specific sin as opposed to asking God to forgive our general sinfulness?
3. Read Psalm 51 about David’s confession before God and make observations. What did God desire most from David in confession?

### **As we have also forgiven our debtors.**

1. What condition must be met in order to be forgiven and have daily fellowship with God? What will happen if this requirement is not met? (Matthew 5:14-15; Mark 11:25-26)
2. How do we go about forgiving others? (Ephesians 4:31-32; Colossians 3:12-12; Titus 3:2-3)

### **And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:**

1. Where does temptation come from? Is temptation a sin? (James 1:13-15; Matthew 4:1)

1. Why would the Father ever allow His children to be tempted? (James 1:2-4; 1 Corinthians 10:13)
2. What are some practical ways we can withstand temptation and be delivered from evil? (Proverbs 4:23-27; Ephesians 6:10-18)

**For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**

1. How does being delivered from evil relate to this closing line, since the word “for” is used?

For Thine is the kingdom (James 1:12) –

For Thine is the power (2 Corinthians 12:9) –

For Thine is the glory forever (Ezekiel 26:21-23) –

2. Bonus: What does “Amen” mean?

# PRAYING LIKE CHRIST: AN APPLICATION



The goal of this study is not merely to help us understand how Christ wants us to pray, but rather to drive us to our knees in dependent prayer so that we can experience the adventure of deeper, more intimate communion with our living God as Christ did. David was called a man after God's own heart, and he was able to eagerly watch as the Lord worked in His life through daily prayer (Psalm 5:3). During this next week, take time at the start of every day to fellowship with God, and then eagerly watch as He reveals Himself to you. Specifically, try following Christ's example.

**Make observations on the following passages concerning Christ's example on prayer:**

Mark 1:35, Luke 5:15-16 –

Luke 6:11-13 –

Luke 9:18, 28-29 –

Mark 14:35-36 –

Matthew 14:23, Mark 6:46 –

1. From your observations, under what circumstances do we see Jesus taking the time to pray?

2. What do we see Jesus praying for?
  
3. What are some of the outcomes of His prayers?

**Below is an outline of the Lord's Prayer with daily Scripture references for each line in the Lord's Prayer that we've discussed. Each day spend some time meditating on the selected Scriptures for each line of the Lord's Prayer. Ask the Lord to enlighten your mind so that you will see Him in a new way, and let the Scripture lead you in what to pray. As we mentioned before, it is a good idea to keep a prayer journal so that you can see how the Lord develops your pray life and answers those prayers specifically.**

**Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.**

Begin your time in complete praise and adoration of your heavenly Father. This is probably one of the most neglected areas in our prayer lives, when it should be our priority. As we worship Him simply for who He is, we honor, esteem, and magnify His name. Beginning our prayers with praise also helps us to center our hearts and minds on the One to whom we pray, and we see more clearly His person, power, and perfection! As we rejoice in our God, we align ourselves in obedience to Him and express all that we have discovered Him to be!

- Sun** – Revelation 15:3-4
- Mon** – 2 Chronicles 20:6
- Tues** – Psalm 100:1-5
- Wed** – Nehemiah 9:5-6
- Thurs** – Deuteronomy 32:4
- Fri** – Psalm 145:10-13
- Sat** – Daniel 2:20-22

**Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.**

Next, spend some time praying for eternity. When we live with an eternal perspective, looking forward to the time when Christ will reign on earth as King, we live with the only right perspective. As we pray for God's kingdom to come to this earth, He gives us eyes that see past the here and now and look to the time when His will truly will be done on earth, as His kingdom literally comes down from heaven!

**Sun** – Colossians 3:1-4  
**Mon** – 2 Corinthians 4:16-18  
**Tues** – Matthew 6:19-20  
**Wed** – Revelation 22:20  
**Thurs** – Revelation 1:7  
**Fri** – 1 Corinthians 4:16-18  
**Sat** – Revelation 5:9-12

### **Give us this day our daily bread. – Praying for personal needs**

Nothing is too big for God to handle or too small for Him to be interested in. He wants us to bring all of our requests to Him with an honest and humble heart, even if we're not sure what to pray for. God will give us wisdom to pray as we ask Him for it, for in the asking we show our dependence upon Him. We should always depend on Him as we lay our concerns, needs, desires, and plans before His feet. Spend some time now laying these before the One who "cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). As you do, you'll find that you can go about daily in His strength, free from the weight of those concerns, because they are in His capable hands!

**Sun** – James 1:5  
**Mon** – Philippians 4:6  
**Tues** – Philippians 4:12  
**Wed** – Philippians 4:19  
**Thurs** – John 16:24  
**Fri** – Romans 11:33  
**Sat** – Psalm 147:9-10

### **Give us this day our daily bread. – Praying for others' needs**

What a privilege it is to ask for our personal needs. But, we also have the responsibility to ask God for the needs of others. Philippians 2:4 calls us to look out for the interests of others. Praying especially for the spiritual needs of our friends, or even our enemies, will change our attitude toward them, and it will become more like God's attitude toward them.

**Sun** – John 17  
**Mon** – Romans 10:1  
**Tues** – James 5:14-16  
**Wed** – Matthew 9:37-38  
**Thurs** – Colossians 4:3-4  
**Fri** – 1 Timothy 2:1-2  
**Sat** – Philippians 1:19-20

## **And forgive us our debts,**

Confession is another area of prayer that is often neglected. It sometimes seems as if God is far away from us when we pray, but if we will have the courage to daily confess our sins one-by-one by their true names, we will benefit greatly in dealing with specific sin. Our conscience will be cleansed, and our intimacy with God will be strengthened. We will begin to learn the meaning of peace, and our lives will begin to show the fruit of true radical change!

**Sun** – Psalm 130:1-4

**Mon** – Psalm 25:6-11

**Tues** – Psalm 32:1-5

**Wed** – Psalm 51:1-4

**Thurs** – Psalm 6:1-3

**Fri** – Psalm 139:23-24

**Sat** – Isaiah 55:6-7

## **As we have also forgiven our debtors.**

Because God has continually shown His grace and mercy in our lives, we should do the same for others we come into contact with. Where there is no forgiveness, bitterness takes its root. Not only does bitterness envelope us with a wall that keeps us from relating rightly with others, but it keeps us from relating rightly with God. It is only when this wall is knocked down through the process of forgiveness that we can have right relationships with others, and with God.

**Sun** – Matthew 18:21-22

**Mon** – Matthew 5:39

**Tues** – Luke 6:35-37

**Wed** – Colossians 3:13

**Thurs** – Luke 15:19-23

**Fri** – Romans 12:17-21

**Sat** – Ephesians 4:32

## **And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:**

We constantly battle temptation in our lives. As believers we all look forward to the day when we will be with Christ in our glorified state, no longer battling with the flesh. But until then, prayer in our lives to resist temptation is a continuous, vital need. If we will ask God, He will provide the way of escape so that we can be delivered from evil.

**Sun** – Romans 6:13  
**Mon** – Ephesians 6:10-11  
**Tues** – Psalm 119:36-37  
**Wed** – Psalm 141:3-4  
**Thurs** – Psalm 119:133  
**Fri** – Philippians 2:3-4  
**Sat** – 2 Corinthians 10:5

**For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**

As we close our prayers, we should elevate the Lord to the position He deserves, recognizing that He is the sovereign One to whom we pray. He holds the outcomes to all that we have asked in the palm of His hand.

**Sun** – Romans 15:13  
**Mon** – 1 Thessalonians 5:23  
**Tues** – Hebrews 13:20-21  
**Wed** – Romans 15:5-6  
**Thurs** – Ephesians 3:20-21  
**Fri** – Jude 24-25  
**Sat** – Romans 16:26-27

# ⊕ LESSON 3

# P R A Y E R : A C C O R D I N G T O P A U L



With any topical study, one of the most helpful tools is a concordance. The concordance can act somewhat as a trail map to guide you through a search for all occurrences of a particular word within the Bible. Once you have found references, a good way to proceed is by categorizing your findings. This can be done in many different ways. In fact, you can categorize according to the criteria of your choosing. For example, in this study we want to look up all of the references for “prayer”, “pray”, or “praying” found in Paul’s letters. Once we find these references, we can categorize them according to their context and meaning. You’ll find that this skill is somewhat similar to a word study; however here, we are looking into a particular topic, so feel free to explore words related to “prayer”.

**Let’s begin by looking at Paul’s references to prayer in his letters. We’ve attached a photocopy of a concordance with references to prayer at the end of this packet.**

**Spend some time now making observations and categories of your references for Paul’s usage of prayer, and BE CREATIVE. Here are a few examples:**

Paul’s instruction (Romans 12:12; 1 Cor 7:5; Col 4:2; 1 Tim 2:1)

Intercession (Philemon 1:4, 1:22; Phil 1:19; 2 Tim 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2, 3)

Thanksgiving (2 Tim 1:3, 2; 2 Thess 1:2)

**Spend some more time now making observations on the following prayers of Paul:**

Ephesians 1:15-23 –

Ephesians 3:14-21 –

Philippians 1:9-11 –

Colossians 1:9-12 –

1. Compare Paul’s prayers to those of Christ. In what ways does Paul follow Christ’s instructions and model of prayer?
2. What do you notice about the things Paul prays for?
3. Why does Paul so often pray for things he wants them to “know”, “comprehend”, or to have the “eyes of their heart enlightened”?
4. Why does Paul pray for so many things that are in the realm of things unseen?

**Now spend some time making observations on 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.**

1. What problem does Paul face in this passage?

2. What did Paul request of God concerning his problem?

3. Why does God respond to Paul in this manner?

## APPLICATION

Now that we have seen Paul's passion and diligence in prayer, we want to evaluate our own prayer lives.

- ⌘ How often do you pray? What does "pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)" mean to you?
  
- ⌘ What kind of things do you pray for consistently?
  
- ⌘ What kind of improvements could be made in your prayer life?
  
- ⌘ Someone once said, "You should spend more time talking to God about men than talking to men about God." This is a much more radical perspective than we often take concerning prayer in our fast-paced, agenda-ruled lives. In order to overcome this way of thinking, pick one person and pray for them for over 15 minutes. You may notice after 5 minutes or so you run out of things to pray for. The remaining 10 minutes really force you to pray in a way dependent upon the Spirit to bring things to mind that need to be prayed for. The only way to pray for things unseen is to **pray by faith in dependence upon the Spirit.**