



**A
Basic
Study
on
PRAYER**

**Prepared By
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2009

A Basic Study on PRAYER

12Lessons

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"A Basic Study on Prayer"

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Lesson One

"What is Prayer?"

There are several Greek words that have been translated by our word "pray" or "prayer." When you see the context where these words are used, it is easy to perceive that they are talking about the activity of prayer.

Euchomai—To pray, to wish for something (2 Cor. 13:7; Jas. 5:16; 3 Jn. 2).

Proseuchomai—To pray, to be earnest or fervent (Rom. 8:26; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 1:9).

Erotao—To pray, to ask, to beseech (Acts 23:18; 1 Jn. 5:16).

Deomai—To pray, to desire, to beseech, to request (2 Cor. 5:20; 2 Cor. 8:4).

There are other terms that are used along with the word "Prayer;" which may also help to define what prayer is. See the following:

Eph. 6:18 _____

Phil. 4:6 _____

Jas. 5:16 _____

Acts 13:3 _____

1 Tim. 2:1 _____

Sometimes it helps to define the use of a word by what **it is not!** We believe the following verses will help to show this:

Matt. 6:5 _____

Matt. 6:6 _____

Matt. 6:7 _____

Matt. 23:14 _____

Prov. 28:9 _____

How would you define the word, "Prayer?" _____

The Importance of Prayer

There are at least four good reasons that can be given to show the importance of Prayer:

1. The most faithful men of God in the Old Testament were praying men!

a) Gen. 15:6; 18:22-32 _____

b) Exo. 32:30-35 _____

c) 1 Sam. 8:1-7 _____

d) 1 Sam. 12:19-23 _____

e) 2 Sam. 7:18-29 _____

2. Jesus, the Son of God, prayed often.

a) Lk. 3:21 _____

b) Lk. 6:12-13 _____

c) Matt. 14:23 _____

d) Jn. 17:1-26 _____

3. The Apostles and early Church Prayed often.

a) Acts 2:42 _____

b) Acts 4:23-31 _____

c) Acts 6:1-4 _____

d) Acts 12:1-5 _____

e) Acts 13:1-3 _____

f) Acts 14:23 _____

4. So much is recorded about people praying in the entire Bible!

Concluding Thoughts

Even though it may be hard to define prayer to everyone's satisfaction, it obviously is something that all of us do. In fact, Prayer seems to be a universal thing with human beings. It has been said that at least one time in a person's life he will pray—even atheist! Since prayer is so universal, it is important that we know accurately what the Bible says so that we can be sure that our prayers have value and can prevail with God.

Lesson Two

"Do we Need to be Taught How to Pray?"

Since we suggested in the previous lesson that prayer seems to be a universal practice of human beings; then, do we need to be taught how to pray? Even though prayer seems to be universal, most of us do feel the same way that Jesus' first disciples felt about prayer: ***"Lord, teach us to pray!"*** People may pray, but pray blindly, with uncertainty, or erratically, but we pray. Prayer was a part of the religious life of the Jews and it is certain that the early disciples that Jesus chose would know something about prayer. Yet, when they observed Jesus praying, they were impressed and wanted to know how to pray like He prayed!

It may be natural for men to turn to a higher Being and petition Him, but to do it correctly and effectively may be another matter. Even a child can be taught to pray and does pray when trained. We may pray for various reasons:

- a) Because of our early training as a child;
- b) Because our emotions are stirred because of some kind of stressful situation;
- c) When there is threatened danger to our life;
- d) Etc.

For whatever reason, most, if not all, pray! But would we not want to learn how to pray effectively and fervently? Maybe this is what the disciples of Jesus were asking of Him.

Five Basic Assumptions when Men Pray!

Read the following Scriptures and see if you can pick up on what these five basic assumptions are when we pray to God.

- Heb. 11:6 _____
- Heb. 11:6 _____
- Jn. 3:16 _____
- Jn. 15:5 _____
- Jas. 4:8; 1 Pet. 3:12 _____

If these five elements are not automatically there; then, why would a person pray? _____

Why ask God to Teach us to Pray?

1. Because Jesus is the Master teach! Who better to turn to for a teacher than Jesus? He knows His subject matter well (Matt. 7:28-29). He experienced the need for prayer during His earthly life (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 5:5-9). Nothing would please Jesus any more than for us to learn to persevere in prayer and become effectual in prayer.

2. Because Prayer is so valuable in our lives! It is close fellowship with the High and Holy One in Heaven. It is reaching out to request the blessings of God for us and others. Proper, effectual, and sincere prayer can bring us into an intimate relationship with God.

3. Because effectual prayer is not as easy as it looks! Even though prayer may look simple, it is more difficult than it looks. We need to come to know God's teachings on prayer:

- a) To know what and how to pray for the right things;
- b) To make our life right in full surrender to God's Will;
- c) To learn how to persevere and not faint;
- d) To believe in our "worthiness" to approach God in prayer.

We must also overcome our ignorance and doubts!

Jas. 1:6

This is especially critical:

- a) When our petitions are not given to us that we request;
- b) When it seems that our prayers are powerless;
- c) When there seems to be no answer coming through after long praying.

How Can we be Taught?

1. By instruction in His Word! There is much said about prayer in the whole Bible. It can help us if we will gather all the information about prayer in the Word of God and draw harmonious conclusions. If we do not follow this basic rule of understanding, we will find ourselves believing and teaching something that is not truly taught by God; and, we will be misled and may mislead others.

2. We can be taught effectively by Jesus' examples of praying! The information recording about Jesus' life is for an example for us to follow (1 Pet. 2:21). Some of the more touching times in Jesus' life were when He prayed earnestly to His Father:

- a) He prayed often and under all kinds of situations.
- b) He prayed all night before choosing His Apostles (Matt. 10).
- c) He prayed earnestly before His death in great agony (Matt. 26:42).
- d) He prayed earnestly for His Apostles as well as for us (Jn. 17).
- e) Even as He was dying a horrible death, He prayed for others (Lk. 23:34).

There is no greater example to follow than that of Jesus.

3. We can be instructed by examples of godly people who prayed! The Bible has many such examples. The Apostles early emphasized prayer's importance to the early church when they said: *"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."* (Acts 6:4). All of these examples have been recorded for our benefit today. Even godly people today can serve as a source of encouragement for us to learn how to pray correctly and effectively. But we need to be careful in using the examples of the Apostles that we do not expect miraculous events to occur like the Apostles. The miraculous was only for that early period of the beginning of the church.

The Model Prayer

There is no indication that Jesus gave this outline of what prayer should contain to be prayed verbatim. To do so would make prayer more mechanical than real! It does give a quick overview of what our prayers can contain.

- 1. Honor to God.** (Matt. 6:9) Express appropriate praise of His being.
- 2. Petitions to God.** (1 John 5:15) There are all kinds of things to ask God's blessing upon, as well as people.
- 3. Supplications to God.** (Phil. 4:6) Not only for ourselves, but for others.
- 4. Indicate dependence upon God.** (Matt. 6:11) We rely on God for all that we have.
- 5. Confession to God.** (1 John 1:9) After examining our lives, we can confess our failures to God.
- 6. Ask for deliverance from temptation.** (Matt. 6:13) They will come and we need to overcome them with God's help.
- 7. Indications of submission to God's Will.** (Matt. 26:39) What we pray about may not be for our or others' best good.
- 8. Thanksgiving to God.** (Phil. 4:6) Such should always be included!

These are basic factors that we need to keep in mind as we pray to God. There possibly are other things that could be mentioned that would come under one of the above headings.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

If we are to be taught how to pray, we must:

- (a) Be willing and desirous to be taught;
- (b) Be sincere and honest;
- (c) Be willing to study, learn and apply what we are taught; and
- (d) Be willing to stay with it—persevere—always pray and faint not!

A life of prayer often requires more than most people are willing to give. Not only must we give ourselves to God, but as well, endless study, meditation, and evaluation of our faith so that we can become strong in prayer. Do we really want to enroll in Jesus' School of Prayer? Are we willing to let His teachings compel us to pray? Will we let His promises prompt us to pray! Will we let His offer of mediatorship prostrate us before the throne of God?

How truly blessed we are to live with the knowledge that the great and true God of the Universe is our Father and seeks for us to come into His august presence to make our petitions known to Him. May our prayers always acknowledge His Fatherhood and may we strive to live up to our relationship as the "children of the Most High God!"

Lesson Three

"For What Should We Pray?"

When men are asked to pray publicly, they are sometimes nervous and do not remember what to pray for or do not know what to pray for. They will have a very short prayer that often is not what is needed at the time. We need to be taught, schooled, and trained in the things for which we should Pray. In this lesson, we will be looking at primarily what is stated in the New Testament as to what we should be praying about.

1. We should pray that God's Will will be done.

- a) Matt. 6:10 _____
- b) Matt. 26:42 Jn. 4:34 _____

2. We should pray for the daily necessities of life.

- a) Matt. 6:11 _____
- b) Matt. 6:24-34 _____

3. We should pray for forgiveness of our sins.

- a) Matt. 6:12; Jn. 8:44; Col. 1:13 _____
- b) Acts 8:22 _____
- c) 1 Jn. 1:7-10 _____

4. We should pray for God's help.

- a) Matt. 6:13; 26:41; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Pet. 2:9 _____
- b) Matt. 26:35-46 _____
- c) Acts 13:1-3 _____
- d) Jas. 5:13 _____
- e) Phil. 4:6 _____

5. We should pray for Preachers of the Gospel.

- a) Rom. 15:30 _____
- b) Col. 4:2-3 _____
- c) 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1 _____

6. We should pray for Earthly Rulers.

- a) 1 Tim. 2:1-2 _____
- b) Rom. 13:1-3 _____

7. We should pray for the welfare of the city or place where we live.

- a) Jer. 29:4-7 _____
- b) Psa. 122:6 _____

8. We should pray for more laborers to enter the harvest.

- a) Jn. 4:35-37 _____
- b) Matt. 9:37-38 _____

9. We should pray that others may be saved.

- a) Rom. 10:1 _____
- b) Rom. 10:2-3 _____

10. We should pray for one another.

- a) Rom. 1:9 _____
- b) 1 Cor. 1:4 _____
- c) Eph. 1:14, 16 _____
- d) Phil. 1:3-4 _____
- e) Jas. 5:16 _____

Concluding Thoughts

The above gives a sample of potentially what we can and should pray about. It would seem to be obvious that God did not list everything for which we can pray; however, what he has given us in His Book can help to illustrate the kinds of things and persons for which we can pray. It might be beneficial to make a list of the various things you want and feel the need to pray about each day.

Lesson Four

"Why Pray?"

Jesus said: ***"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."*** (Luke 18:1). One version says, ***"and not to lose heart."*** Look at the following questions and see if you have entertained one or more of these thoughts at one time or another.

- a) *If God knows our needs, why urge on Him our petitions?*
- b) *If God loves us, why beseech Him to bless us? Won't He do it anyway?*
- c) *If God is good, then why urge Him to work good in the world?*
- d) *Why pray at all—just let God do what seems good to Him?*

Someone has suggested: *"Don't we look sort of silly—ignorant humanity asking an all-wise God to do something?"* Or maybe this observation: *"We are weak and sinful humans asking a Holy God of perfect love to do something?"* Did you say, **"Stop right there! You have convinced me! I have felt that way all along."**

Some people do feel that the only value of prayer is to the person praying. Prayer is often looked upon as a glorified "Pep Talk" to spur us on to greater accomplishments. Some have even called prayer a "healthy lie of life." To others, it is merely a "coping mechanism." **But in the face of all of this, Jesus teaches us to always pray and not to faint or lose heart!** God evidently did not give prayer as a "glorified pep rally." Nor did He design prayer just to make us a better person! And for sure, it was not designed by God to mock us or make God appear foolish! God not only insists that we pray, but He has also promised to answer our prayers! And.....there is something that is evident about prayer—God made us in such a way that we desire to pray. All religions have some form of praying involved. It is not only a duty, but it is a natural inclination of the human heart.

Some Reasons for Praying to God

Men move or do things from motivation! What is our motivation for praying to God? What kind of logical reasons can be given for such an activity? May we suggest the following:

1. Prayer is our only means of talking to God. Prayer takes us beyond ourselves to a higher Being. It is our way of drawing nigh to God and He has promised to draw nigh to us (James 4:8-10). God speaks to us through His word (Heb. 1:1-2). As we read, listen, or hear the Word of God, He is speaking to us. Prayer is our way to speak back to God. If we do not draw nigh to God, He has not promised to draw nigh to us!

2. Prayer helps us to keep a close relationship with God. It is generally understood that we not only are better people when we sincerely pray often, but our minds and hearts are centered more upon spiritual things. Prayer is definitely a way of keeping us close to God (Ps. 55:16, 22). Otherwise, there is a danger of spiritual decay in our lives and our religion will only become a shell.

3. Prayer is God's means of conferring benefits and blessings that we need. Some look upon prayer as something that is burdensome, dull and difficult; and, in reality benefits God more than man. To them, prayer is a kind of favor we can confer upon God. But, contrary-wise, man is the one who needs prayer, not God. We are benefited, not God! Prayer is a great privilege, a blessing, and an opportunity for the Christian! Prayer should not be looked upon as "begging God for something" in order to get our way. God will not become our slave (Phil. 4:6-7). Someone has expressed the thought in this way: *"Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His highest willingness."* He wants to bless us, but He also wants us to come nigh to Him (Matt. 7:7). God is definitely interested in His children's welfare and desires our good. He has the power and willingness to help. He is a wise, loving, and beneficent God. But He also challenges His people to draw nigh to him in prayer.

4. Our forgiveness, day by day, is dependant upon our praying to God and His answering our prayer. (1 John 1:9; Acts 8:22). Under the Old Testament, daily sacrifices were offered for the sins of the people—indicating continual cleansing. Under the New Testament, it is by continual confessing and penitent prayer that we can have continual forgiveness and cleansing (1 Jn. 1:7).

5. To express our Respect and thankfulness to God. (Phil. 4:6). All men have much to be thankful for before God, but the Christian in particular has even more reasons. We can never praise Him enough for all His benefits!

Concluding Thoughts

God challenges His people to come nigh to Him—not only with a humble heart, but with clean hands and hearts (James 4:6-10). To approach Him with the wrong attitude invalidates any effort on our part to pray to God. And, since we only act out of motivation, God has given us sufficient reasons, logical reasons, for us to pray always and not to faint or grow weary.

Prayer is pictured as part of the armor of the Christian that helps him to ward off the temptations of the devil (Eph. 6:11-18). We are told to resist him, steadfast in the faith (1 Pet. 5:9). When Jesus' temptations were the strongest (in the Garden of Gethsemane), He resorted to ardent, fervent prayer to His Father (Matt. 26:36-39). He even exhorted His disciples at the same time to *"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* (Matt. 26:41).

Why pray? There are many good reasons! Let's enroll ourselves in the school of prayer so that we can become the kind of praying people that God desires us to become!

Lesson Five

"Are There Conditions to Acceptable Prayer?" (#1)

While prayer may be a natural thing for human beings, it is not really the privilege of all people. If the unsaved person has the same privileges that the saved person has—then, why become a Christian! The very way that Jesus taught His disciples to pray was: ***"Our FATHER, which is in heaven!"*** Who can truthfully call God "Father"—but the children of God! We believe prayer is a great blessing for the Christian!

Some religious people have mis-used the story told of two men going up to the Temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14). They have taken the prayer of the Publican (***"God, be merciful to me a sinner!"***) and have advocated that a sinner can become saved by praying this prayer! It is quite obvious that both men were already children of God—they both went up to the Temple to pray. But one had the right attitude in approaching God (humility) and the other had a wrong attitude (self-righteousness). The New Testament clearly teaches that our faith in Christ as Lord has to be put into action by "obeying the Gospel" in order to be saved and become children of God (Acts 2:38, etc.).

In addition to the above thought, there are quite a few indications in Scripture that there are definitely conditions to acceptable prayer.

Conditions to Meet

1. Our prayers are to be addressed to God, "our Father."

- a) Matt. 6:9 _____
- b) 1 Jn. 3:1-2 _____
- c) Matt. 6:32 _____
- d) Matt. 7:21 _____

2. Our Prayers to God are made possible by the Mediatorship of Jesus.

- a) John 14:13-14 _____
- b) 1 Tim. 2:5 _____
- c) 1 Jn. 2:1 _____

3. Our Prayers must come from a forgiving heart.

- a) Matt. 6:12-15 _____
- b) Eph. 4:31-32 _____

4. Our Prayers must be in harmony with God's Will.

- a) Matt. 6:10 _____
- b) Matt. 7:21 _____
- c) 1 Jn. 3:22; 5:14-15 _____

5. Our Prayers must be in Faith.

- a) Matt. 21:22 _____
- b) Jas. 1:5-8 _____
- _____
- c) Heb. 11:6 _____
- d) Heb. 4:14-16 _____
- _____

Concluding Thoughts

Our next lesson will continue with the listing of "conditions" of acceptable Prayer.

Please remember that lessons like this and the next one are not to discourage us in our prayer life, but to enhance such and make it meaningful and effective. These are obvious teachings from Scripture that must not be ignored. We are capable of dealing with all of the above and the additional ones that will be given in the next lesson.

Lesson Six

"Are There Conditions to Acceptable Prayer?" (#2)

"Free," "free," "free!" We hear this very often in our financial or merchandising worlds. But is what they are offering really free. When religious people say that salvation is free, what do they mean by this expression? Is salvation really free? Is there anything that man must do in order to be saved? If he must do something, then is it free? If salvation is free; then, in what sense is it free? Can we say that Prayer is free? Is there anything that man must do in order for God to hear and answer his prayer? If there is something he must do, then is Prayer free? If Prayer is free; then, in what sense is it free? If there are conditions that man must meet before his Prayer will be acceptable to God; then, it would seem that it is not purely, really, free!

We continue with the study of conditions to acceptable Prayer.

Conditions to Meet (continued)

6. Our Prayers must come from a humble heart.

- a) Lk. 18:9-14 _____

- b) Jas. 4:7-10 _____

7. We must abide in Christ if we expect our prayers to be answered.

- a) Jn. 15:7 _____

- b) Jn. 15:4-7 _____

8. We must practice righteousness.

- a) 1 Pet. 3:12 _____

- b) 1 Jn. 3:7, 22 _____

- c) Jas. 5:16 _____

- d) Tit. 2:11-12 _____

9. We must walk in the light and confess our sins.

- a) 1 Jn. 1:7 _____

- b) 1 Jn. 1:9 _____

10. We must pray fervently and earnestly.

a) Jas. 5:16 _____

b) Jas. 5:17-18 _____

11. We must pray with understanding.

a) 1 Cor. 14:15 _____

b) 1 Cor. 14:16 _____

c) Matt. 6:7-8 _____

Concluding Thoughts

One of the beauties of the Psalms is its personal application of the Will of God in one's life. David makes the Psalms real because he often speaks about himself and his condition before God. Read **Ps. 32:1-6** and figure out what David indicates is the "reason" that "causes everyone to pray to God.

The above conditions of acceptable prayer may not be all that could be brought forth from the Scriptures, it is evident that we need to be taught how to pray!

Lesson Seven

"Hindrances to Our Prayers"

Since Prayer is perceived as being something "natural" for man to do; it is assumed that men will call upon God, especially in time of need. For the Christian, Prayer is a blessing from God that we will engage in at all times—with our petitions or with our praise and thanksgiving! But the Christian also needs to be aware of "conditions" that will make our prayers acceptable to God; and, as well avoid those things that will hinder our prayers from being answered by God. This lesson will emphasize several things that the Scriptures indicate will hinder our prayers before the throne of God.

Before we look at what can hinder our prayers, let's emphasize some things again that are important for us to keep in mind:

1. Prayer is for the Christian, not for the sinner. It is a promised blessing to those who turn to God in sincerity.
2. These prayers are offered in the name of Jesus as our Mediator. We cannot approach God on our own merit, but through the merit of Jesus.
3. It is not the purpose of prayer to impose our will upon God, but to make our request according to the Will of God.

Hindrances to avoid

- 1. We need to be serious and watchful in our life as a Christian, but in particular in our prayers before the throne of God.**

1 Pet. 4:7 _____

The Christian life is very serious business—it must not be taken lightly or flippantly. The reason for our being watchful is emphasized later in Peter's Letter.

1 Pet. 5:8 _____

If we are careless about our obligations or blessings, we are the losers!

- 2. Not asking God!**

Jas. 4:2 _____

This hindrance may be from neglect or lack of faith that God will hear His children. We certainly cannot know if God will grant our petition unless we ask Him! Why would a Christian want to approach the throne of God through Jesus often—what a privilege this is to communicate with our maker, and what a blessing to have him hear and answer our petition that we feel so strongly about.

3. To ask amiss!

Jas. 4:3

We should have the right motive for asking things of God. We should ask ourselves—*"Do I want this petition to pamper my lust and carnal appetite? Do I want this so I can live in ease and pleasure?"* Acceptable prayer is when our will is in harmony with God's Will and the answer will bring glory to the name of God. We need to study diligently so that we can know the Will of God and abide in it and by it....and asked accordingly.

4. If I regard sin in my life—or act the hypocrite!

Ps. 66:18

What does it mean to regard iniquity in my heart? It probably would have to do with my wanting to hold on to sin and not give it up. As long as I love sin, walk in sin, continue in the way of sin.....why would I pray to God? The willingness to die to sin (Rom. 6:1-2) is a very basic concept of what it means to be a Christian.

The strongest condemnations that Jesus expressed during His public ministry were against hypocrisy! Much stress is laid upon God's people being sincere. An outward shell of prayer has little value and the many unanswered prayers should make this obvious. Prayer is more than words or formality in bowing before God or just telling God what we want or need. It must come from the heart, soul, or the inner person (Jn. 4:24). Sincerity is appreciated by both God and men. Hypocrites, God will judge and their prayers are an abomination to him. If we are sincere in prayer, we will be intense, fervent, not half-hearted, or indifferent (Jas. 5:16).

5. If I know my brother has something against me and I do not try to make it right!

Matt. 5:23-24

The instructions are clear—go first and make things right with your brother; then, come and offer your worship to God! Prayer is one of the activities of our worship to God. So, the principle stated here would seem to apply to Prayer.

6. Praying to be seen and heard and praised by men!

Matt. 6:5-8

Our prayers are to be addressed to God—they are not addressed to men! Prayer is not to be done so that men may praise us for the beautiful words, etc.; rather, our Prayer is to God and expressed in simple and sincere words that show we are not putting on a show for men. When Jesus prayed the same Prayer three times, was it done over and over so God would finally be persuaded to hear Him? (Matt. 26:44).

Concluding Thoughts

It is important for the Christian to be sincere, grow out of selfishness and be concerned for others, deal with sin in his life properly, not to harbor a grudge against anyone, always being willing to forgive any wrong done to him, and work at keeping his family relationships the very best that he can to the honor and glory of God. It is this kind of person that is granted audience with the King of the Universe through His beloved Son, Jesus the Christ (Jas. 4:8).

Lesson Eight

"What Role Does Attitudes Play?"

The outward shell of prayer has little value as the many unanswered prayers should make obvious. And the failure to see this can destroy the power in prayer! Prayer is more than words, or formality in bowing before God one or more times a day, as well as just telling God what we want and expect to get it! Acceptable prayer to God is conditioned upon many things: (a) Right words; (b) Right kind of life; and (c) The right kind of spirit or attitude. In this lesson we want to look at some attitudes that help to make our prayers acceptable to God.

1. ATTITUDE OF BELIEVING....NOT DOUBTING!

If this was all that was said on Prayer we would have it made! (OR, would we?) You would think that Prayer would be simple, but even Faith must overcome many obstacles. Unless we can believe through it all, Prayer has little value to us.

Mk. 11:24 _____

2. ATTITUDE OF SINCERITY & FERVENCY!

Sincerity is appreciated both by men and God! *"The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* Hypocrites...God will judge....their prayers are an abomination. If we are sincere in prayer, we will be intense, fervent, not half-hearted, listless, or indifferent. The word means... *"Striving, agonizing, or endeavoring with strenuous zeal."*

Matt. 6:5 _____

Jas. 5:16 _____

3. ATTITUDE OF HUMILITY!

Pride, self-exaltation, self-righteousness filled the heart of the Pharisee. He extolled his virtues. He looked upon the Lord as his debtor because of his good life. But the Publican made no pretense of righteousness. He realized his true condition. In humility & self-abasement, he cast himself upon the mercy of God. Acceptable prayer must be characterized by such a spirit. Not depending upon one's eloquence or accomplishments; but, boldly approaching God because of His grace!

Luke 18:10-14 _____

4. ATTITUDE OF A FORGIVING SPIRIT!

A forgiving spirit shows mercy. We show mercy, because God has shown it to us. If we refuse, God will refuse to show us mercy. We literally are asking God to deal with us, as we deal with others!

Matt. 6:14-15 _____

Jas. 2:13 _____

5. ATTITUDE OF RIGHT MOTIVE!

What is our motive for praying? Especially in the material realm. Do we want to pamper our lusts or carnal appetites? Do we want to live in ease and pleasure? Acceptable prayer is when our will is in harmony with God's Will. Our petitions are His petitions. Ask that which will bring glory to His name. "*Thy will be done.*" We need to study diligently to know the Will of God and abide by it.

James 4:3 _____

1 John 5:1 _____

6. ATTITUDE OF THOUGHTFULNESS!

Meaningless and hard to understand expressions are forbidden! Also forbidden are empty, meaningless, inane mumbling of the same expressions over and over. Many words with little meaning are worthless. Prayer should express understanding and show thoughtfulness.

1 Cor. 14:15 _____

Matt. 6:7-8 _____

7. ATTITUDE OF WATCHFULNESS!

Watchfulness makes us aware of the dangers of the evil one. But it also emphasizes the need for constant prayer. The danger is real...that we can fall into temptation & sin. The price of Spiritual Liberty is Eternal Vigilance!

Mark 14:38 _____

Col. 4:2 _____

8. ATTITUDE OF PERSISTENCE!

We know we can prevail upon some men, if we persist long enough. This is easily illustrated with a child and parent.....**"Please!"** How much more so with God who wants us to pray continually? Men's reluctance to give is real. God's reluctance to give only seems real. God has merely chosen to operate this way....for our good! The two parables in Luke 18 illustrate the need of persistence in Prayer.

Luke 18:1-8 _____

Luke 18:9-14 _____

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

"....ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." Prayer is not simple, but quite complex. To avail with God, we must learn how to pray. This involves getting our attitudes right!

Lesson Nine

"The Prayers of Jesus" (#1)

What better way to study about Prayer than to study the Prayers of Jesus! We need to be careful when we look at the miraculous elements that sometimes are connected with His Prayers. There should be no doubt that Jesus' life, words, and activities can serve us well as an example for us. The New Testament writers did this very thing.

1 Pet. 2:21-23 _____

Heb. 2:17-18 _____

Heb. 4:14-16 _____

Phil. 2:5 _____

In this lesson, we want to analyze two prayers: (1) The one that Jesus stated to the Apostles when they ask Him to teach them to Pray (Matt. 6:9-15); and (2) The Lord's Prayer that is found in John 17.

**THE MODEL PRAYER
(Matt. 6:9-15)**

We have already briefly noticed the "Model Prayer" that Jesus taught to His disciples. Our approach in Lesson Two was to see what our prayers should contain. In this approach we want to analyze what is "behind" each of the elements of Prayer.

- 1. God should be honor!** He is "our Father in Heaven!" He is an "all-knowing" Father....He knows what we need before we even ask (Matt. 6:32). If He knows, then why do we need to ask? In Prayer, we can definitely pay honor to the One that has redeemed us, cleansed us, and adopted us as His children. We can also give honor to Him as the One that provides for us daily. We let Him know this and that we are continually dependant upon Him for our very existence. The very fact that we ask, shows our dependency upon Him.
- 2. Our Prayers should reflect spiritual growth!** We must grow from being too selfish and self-centered to being more and more other-people centered. When our Prayers are full of "give me," "I need," "help me," etc.; it should tell us something. But when our Prayers are more centered on others, their needs, their welfare, etc.; then, we can see that we are growing up.

Phil. 2:3-4 _____

Rom. 12:10, 13 _____

- 3. Our Prayers can also reflect our growth in faith!** The Bible speaks about a person being "full of faith" (Acts 6:5); but, it also talks about the close disciples of Jesus (who believed in Him) being rebuked for their "lack of faith" or "little faith" (Matt. 14:31; 16:8). Thus, a person may believe, but that belief may not be strong enough to "weather" the storms of life that a person has to deal with. So, it is important that our faith grows stronger and stronger. Jesus challenged His disciples to grow in their faith by different unique expressions:

Matt. 17:20 _____

Matt. 21:19-21 _____

Jesus pointed out some people who showed greater faith than the average person who claims to believe:

Matt. 8:10 _____

Matt. 15:28 _____

Jesus' Prayer in John 17

While Jesus was nearing the end of His earthly life and was struggling with what lay ahead for Him; yet, He showed His concern for His close disciples and those who would become His disciples through the years ahead.

- 1. His Prayer for His Disciples (Jn. 17:9-19).** He prayed for their safety and steadfastness—that the Father would keep them from the evil one. His prayer was not for them to have no struggles, but that they would hold fast to the truth that both sanctifies them and keeps them close to God. Again, we can see the need for spiritual growth by the followers of Christ. While He was in the flesh and in their presence, He kept them on the right "track." But He was going to leave them and they needed that presence in some sense that would take His place. The Truth would be that "power" that would help to keep them safe. But along with the Truth was Prayer that would draw them close to the Father. Jesus' example in this Prayer shows clearly the closeness He had with His Father!
- 2. His Prayer for even us (Jn. 17:20-26).** We become disciples of Jesus through believing the Gospel (Rom. 1:16), which is God's power to save those who believe. It is that same Truth that the first disciples believed and held to. He is Praying for the unity, oneness, of these believers. He also Prays that the Father's love will be in them to help keep that oneness which helps the world to believe that Jesus is truly the Son of God. He wants us to be able to enjoy that heavenly relationship with the Father that He had "before the creation of the world." He gave His life willingly in order to make this a possibility. What an example of unselfishness and trust in the Father's Plan of Redemption. Our Prayers should give us insights to our spiritual strength and maturity—our "great faith" in God.

Concluding Thoughts

As we Pray, let's look carefully at "how" we Pray and "for what or whom" we Pray; for our Prayers can tell us a lot about ourselves and our spiritual condition. Beautiful words in Prayer may reflect "ostentation" or "show" **more so** than deep faith in God. Long Prayers may be said to impress men, but even the shortest Prayer can impressed God (Lk. 18:10-14) when it comes from a sincere and penitent heart. There was nothing "showy" or "things said to impress the worldly-minded" in Jesus' Prayers. They were simple, straight to the point, showed unselfishness, and a concern for others. Who better could we emulate than Jesus?

Lesson Ten

"The Prayers of Jesus" (#2)

We want to take a little different approach in this lesson as we look at the Prayers of Jesus. It will be an effort to stir up our minds to look for valuable lessons that we can gain as we look more closely at our Savior's Prayer life. Please make an effort to get the background to these passages in order to clearly understand why Jesus was Praying.

Luke 6:12-13

1. What facts about this Prayer are evident to you? _____

2. What is significant about Jesus praying all night? _____

3. What conclusion would you draw concerning your prayer-life? _____

Luke 5:15; Mark 1:35; Matt. 6:5-6

1. What possible reasons can be suggested why Jesus sought to Pray in places away from people? _____

2. How do you feel about praying out loud in a public restaurant? _____

3. Did Jesus ever Pray in public before people? _____

Matt. 26:38-44

1. What are some significant facts in this Prayer of Jesus? _____

2. Should Jesus praying the same prayer 3 times be considered "vain repetition?" _____
3. Give reasons for your answer? _____

4. Was Jesus selfish in praying for "this cup to pass from me?" _____

5. Give reasons for your answer? _____

Luke 23:34

1. Does the shortness of these Prayer impress you? _____
2. Should we pray for God to forgive sinful friends, relatives, or family members who have not obeyed the Gospel? _____
3. Did the Father answer Jesus' Prayer concerning these people? _____

Matt. 27:46

1. Was this a prayer to God? _____
2. How did Jesus know that the Father had forsaken Him and why? _____

3. Is talking to God considered Praying? _____

Concluding Thoughts

1. Did you notice how many of the above "Prayers" were so short? But, at the same time, the Bible says that Jesus Prayed all night! How do you reconcile this? _____

2. Should most of our Prayers be "one liners?" _____

3. When would it be wise to spend a lot of time in Prayer? _____

It is wise not to try to bind one's ideas about the length, wording, or position concerning Prayer. God seems to have left quite a few things to our judgment. But He obviously wants us to continue in Prayer. It would probably be wise to watch for other examples of Prayer recorded in both the Old and New Testament in order to see how others have Prayed to God.

Lesson Eleven

"Why aren't My Prayers Answered?"

Do "unanswered prayers" lead to atheism? Or, is it a mis-understanding or being mis-taught about prayer that leads people to a lack of faith in God? Have you ever prayed earnestly for something over and over and saw no results? And....has this caused you to doubt the validity of prayer or the promises that God makes? Be honest! If we pray for something and do not receive it; then, how do we understand God's promises about receiving what we pray for? How would you understand the following passage:

"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." (1 John 3:22).

Have you ever asked something of God and not received it? How do you reconcile the inspired statement of John with the fact that you did not receive what you requested? Is this passage teaching us that prayer is like a magic wand—wave it and presto it happens? Is God like a "cosmic bellhop" that is waiting for His creatures to give Him directions so He can do their bidding? Do you consider this a very mature view of God and of prayer?

Let's go a step further! How would you understand this statement of Jesus in view of answering Prayer:

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matt. 7:7-8)

Are we to believe that all I have to do is just to ask for something and God will give it to me? That is what it seems to be saying, isn't it? But all of us know that it just doesn't work that way! The inspired Apostle Paul said that he asked God three times for the "thorn in his side" to be removed, and God did not do it! (2 Cor. 12:8-10). So, something is wrong! How am I to understand these plain, simple statements of Jesus? It is just possible that there are more teachings about prayer that modifies the above statements.

Let me illustrate the above statement! John 3:16 plainly states that a person who believes will receive eternal life! So, all a person has to do is just believe! Right? If there were not other passages in the Scriptures to modify our understanding of John 3:16, that would be all that one has to do. But there are many other plain Scriptures that show that the word "faith" involves more than a mere mental assent to some facts! It must be an obedient faith (Jas. 2:17-24; Acts 2:38, etc.). **So, there must be passages of Scripture that would modify our understanding of such passages as Matt. 7:7-8 or 1 John 3:22.** And to keep our faith strong in the promises of God, we need to see what these other passages teach!

MODIFIED OR CONDITIONAL PROMISES

A great number of God's promises are conditional or depend upon certain activities of His people. Prayer would certainly seem to be one of those conditional promises. When the Apostle

John said *"Whatever we ask we receive"* he did not end his statement there—he added *"because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."* (1 John 3:22). But the conditions do not stop there even, for in the 5th chapter he writes: *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."* (5:14). Jesus illustrated this concept when He prayed to the Father to remove the cup of suffering ahead of Him, but ended the prayer with: *"not my will but your will be done!"* (Luke 22:42). God did not remove the cup of suffering! Thus, God urges us to earnestly pray for things in our lives, but He keeps the privilege of whether to grant them or not in His own power. And since He certainly knows what is best in every situation, we willingly surrender to His Will in the matter! (Matt. 7:11). It is not a question of God making promises and then not keeping them, but that His promises are conditioned on one or more things (some of which we may never be aware of) which modifies His promises. Thus, we need to keep on praying and believing in God and His promises, but all the time realizing that God knows what is best for His children.

A SPECIAL MODIFIER OF PRAYER

Jesus made several statements of promise to His special disciples or Apostles that do not apply to us today. It basically deals with the time during Jesus' public ministry and during the early years of the beginning of the church. Let's look at a few passages to illustrate:

Matt. 21:21-22—*"Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."*

John 14:13-14—*"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."*

John 14:12—*"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."*

These are outstanding promises and the Apostles learned by experience that they were given great power. They were able to do the same works that Jesus did, but even more, they were able to teach and bring people into the kingdom of Heaven that Jesus did not personally do during His public ministry. And there is an important fact to notice about the powers that the Apostles had—they did not heal everyone they came in contact with. Even some of their fellow-workers that got sick were not healed by them. It is obviously not God's will that every sick person get well—even though we may pray earnestly for them. Just remember.....many of the early Christians were put to death for their faith in Jesus—God allowed such! The Apostle Peter was delivered from prison and death, but the Apostle James was beheaded! We have to depend upon God to know what is best in each case. We probably should be thankful that God doesn't just give us everything we ask for. In our limited view of things, we cannot see the "big picture!"

(Isa. 55:8). So, even if we pray for the wrong thing, God will not give us what is bad for us (Rom. 8:28).

PRAYER & RESPONSIBILITY

A most important statement is: *"Prayer is not a substitute for what is our responsibility to do!"* God does not promise to do for us what we can and should do for ourselves. He does not promise to protect us from all difficulties, failures, or tragedies, etc. By now, we should have learned that problem solving can be a means of growth for us (Heb. 12:3-11; James 1:2-4). We should not knowingly put ourselves in harm's way and expect God to deliver us (Matt. 4:7). Prayer is not a substitute for obedience (1 John 3:22). Sinners are not saved by prayer, but by an obedient faith in Jesus (Heb. 5:8-9). Prayer is not a substitute for medical help (1 Tim. 5:23; James 5:14-16)—we need to do what we can! Prayer is not a substitute for work (Matt. 6:11; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:6-10).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Lord, teach us about prayer, the need of prayer, and how to understand our responsibilities in view of prayer. Teach us "how" we ought to pray and "for what" we ought to pray. May we do so with great humility realizing who is the creature and who is the creator! May we humbly submit to the will of God—strongly believing that God absolutely knows best! May we be like Job as he earnestly ask God for a reason for all the things going wrong in his life—but was never told why! Yet, he could still say: *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!"* (Job 13:15).

Lesson Twelve

"A Lifestyle of Prayer"

A significant fact about prayer is given in Ephesians 6:14-18! Paul, by inspiration of God, is stressing the necessity of the Christian putting on the "WHOLE" armor of God; and, a part of that armor is "PRAYER!" He stresses: *"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints..."* In his Colossian Letter, Paul uses an example of one of his fellow-laborers (Epaphras) to illustrate this idea: *"Who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."* (4:12). Paul's admonition to the Thessalonians was: *"Pray without ceasing!"* (1 Thess. 5:17). Such language as the above quotes certainly leads to the idea that fervent and ceaseless prayer should be the "Life-Style" of the Christian!

LOSING THE RACE!

Why do so many Christians drop out of the Christian race? I am sure that several good reasons could be given, but one basic reason is obvious—a lack of a devout prayer life! The old adage that says: *"If you don't grow, you go backwards!"* may be another way of saying that *"without prayer, the Christian will not progress spiritually!"* It not only takes a lot of continuous Bible study along with fervent prayer; but as well, an obedient life in order to stay faithful to the end! (Rev. 2:10).

God's people should have these important watchwords to express their life before God: **Powerful, Persistent, and ultimate Victory!** Prayer has to play a big role to make these words sincerely a part of our thinking (2 Tim. 1:7). There are no quitters among those who have made Prayer a major part of their life. **The Apostles** saw the need for prayer (Acts 6:4). **The early church** continued steadfastly in prayer (Acts 2:42, etc.). **Jesus** saw the need for prayer in his public ministry continually.

"If we think that we can survive this world and its challenges without continual prayer, it is quite obvious that we have too great an inflated opinion of ourselves!"

Without prayer, the Christian will be vulnerable to the devil's fiery darts and we will not be able to stand against his wiles! We will have to endure the misery and despair that this world brings to us without the powerful help and comfort of prayer. Our lives will be filled with worry and anxiety that will drag us down because we do not have prayer to cast all our cares upon Him who cares for us (Heb. 13:6; 1 Pet. 5:7). No wonder that such people do not endure to the end.

Heb. 3:6 _____

Heb. 3:12-14 _____

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

- 1. Pray when we wake up in the morning!** We can be thankful for the night's rest, but also ask for His protection during the day. Prayer helps us to start the day off right!
- 2. Pray before our meals!** God has amply provided for our welfare. The least we can do is to offer thanksgiving for the bounties of life we enjoy. We can bow and say a silent prayer if we are in a public situation where it would be harder to understand when others are involved.
- 3. We may want to have other set times for prayer as well!** Daniel had his set times that he felt the need for in his life. Certainly, we today have some of the same needs that he felt that caused him to set aside time for prayer.
- 4. We are privileged to pray at any time in any place!** Things often come up that will cause us to want to go to God in prayer and petition for ourselves or for others. Prayers need not be long—make them straight to the point!
- 5. It is good to pray with one's family!** Children need to see and hear their fathers and mothers pray for them and for others. They need to see that their parents feel their dependence upon God as they feel their dependence upon their parents.
- 6. We should pray, not only when we feel a need, but also when we are happy and contented.** We need to pray when we feel discouraged or face some special problem. But that should not be the only time we pray! It is easy to pray when we have a need, but do we forget to pray when things are going well?
- 7. We should pray simply and naturally.** Prayers should be simple, sincere, and heart-felt. They are not for show to men or to God! God is not impressed with our eloquence or much speaking, but with a broken and contrite heart!
- 8. We should pray fervently.** Such will avail before the throne of God. We need to feel deeply about the things we talk to God about and show that concern by doing what we can in addition to our petitions to the Father.
- 9. Pray until prayer becomes a desirable habit—a life-style!** It must not be a "mere" habit, but something we do on a regular basis just like we do eating and sleeping. Our lives are largely made up of habits. We need to have good habits filling our lives.
- 10. Spend time in prayer each day.** Someone has stated: *"I guarantee that anyone who prays as much as ten minutes each day will be saved."* This is pretty rash....so, why would a man make such a statement? His reasoning was that if a man spent this much time in prayer that he would also do all the other things the Lord requires of him. I think that most of us can see from experience why such a statement would be made.

FAITHFUL TO THE END!

Possibly, one of the greatest reasons and blessing of continual prayer is that it helps to maintain my relationship with God. The inspired Apostle John encourages the Christian to:

- 1. Walk in the light as God is in the light;**
- 2. Confess our sins.** (1 John 1:7-10).

Why? What is so important about how we walk and what we talk to God about? In both instances it clearly states that if we do these two things we can be assured of our relationship with God—all our sins will be forgiven, cleansed, taken away! It is not hard for the humble, sincere Christian to realize that continual prayer is needed for this alone if for no other reason. Also, notice that John adds this then: *"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."* (2:1). Jesus makes it possible for our prayers to go up before the Father because of His intercession for us. No man can do what Jesus can do when we access His help in prayer.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Why pray? Such a question really seems trite now that we have just briefly looked at prayer and what it can mean to our lives! We certainly should want to avoid those things that would hinder our prayers from going up before the throne of God. And beyond a doubt, all of us could very easily say as the Apostles did: *"Lord, teach us to pray!"*

While all men may attempt to pray to a Supreme Being, that is no indication that they will be heard or that God will give them what they request. We firmly believe prayer to be a spiritual blessing of the Christian and that it should be a major part of the life of a Christian.

We pray that this study may be a means of helping to encourage you to be more concerned and involved in your prayer life and that prayer will certainly become (if it is not already) a life-style that all can see.

