

CHAPTER 5

PRAYER - COMMUNICATING WITH GOD

ASSIGNMENTS:

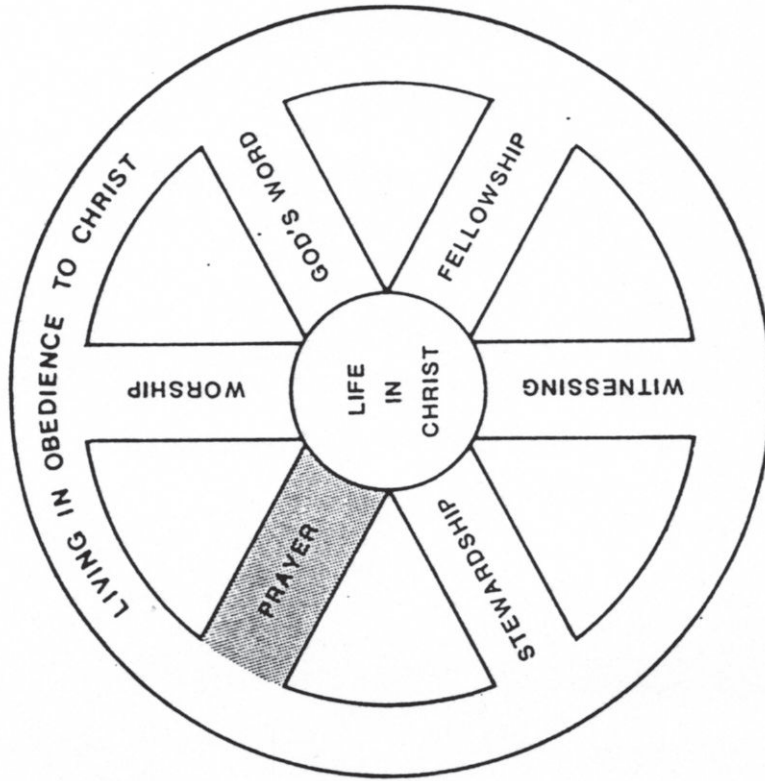
1. Scripture Reading - John 15-21
Read one chapter each day.
2. Prayer - Use the prayer list page to record your requests and answers.
3. Memorize - John 16:24
Additional verse - Philippians 4:6,7
4. Study and complete the material in the chapter.
5. Outline the pastor's Sunday sermon.

Outline your daily progress below:

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

CHAPTER 5

PRAYER - COMMUNICATING WITH GOD



Prayer should be the natural overflow of meaningful time in the Scriptures. The act of praying to God completes the fellowship and companionship element in our relationship with Him. We need to respond back to God in prayer after He speaks to us through His Word. In this manner, we share our heart with the One who longs for our companionship.

Prayer unleashes the power of God. Personal battles and battles for others are won in prayer, and God's purposes are furthered. "Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3). "You do not have, because you do not ask God" (James 4:2b).

Through prayer, we have the power and the privilege to be used of God to help change lives. We do not avail ourselves of this power today primarily because of unbelief. The disciples of the first century knew how to pray and claim in faith the power of our omnipotent God. Their prayers helped change the course of history. We serve the same powerful, prayer - answering God today.

PRAYER DEFINED

Simply defined, prayer is conversation with God. It is our way of communicating to Him what is on our heart. Webster calls prayer, "the offering of adoration, confession, supplication, and thanksgiving to God."

Prayer is an expression of confidence in God and dependence on Him. When we realize that God is in control of the whole universe, and yet is personally interested in our lives, we can come to Him through prayer and express hope and assurance (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Prayer is a way we draw near to God, our heavenly Father. When we want to get to know someone, we eagerly establish lines of communication. We use our conversation as a means to draw closer to that person; we get to know them better and they get to know about us. Our communication with the Father is the same way. Relationally, God speaks to us, His children, with His Word through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13,14). We talk to God through prayer and come before Him in intimate fellowship. God desires that we

draw near to Him in this Father-child relationship (Romans 8:14-16).

THOSE WHO CAN PRAY

The unbeliever:

People who are not Christians, that is those who have not repented of their sin and who have not trusted Christ as their Savior, can only pray for salvation. God does not honor any of the prayers of the unbeliever (Isaiah 59:1,2) except when they call on God for repentance and salvation through Christ (Romans 10:9-13).

The believer:

God has given many instructions to believers about how we are to pray and how to maintain an effective prayer life. Two of these include the following:

1. *Those who come to God in the authority and the name of Jesus.* Christ is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). He is the only mediator between God and us (1 Timothy 2:5). God promises to give believers anything in His will if it is asked for in Jesus name. Praying "in His name" means far more than just adding those words as a sort of good-luck charm to the end of our prayers. It means we can now petition the Father with all the authority of Christ! It is like placing a draft on the bank of heaven with the check actually signed by Jesus Christ. We ask in His name on the basis of who He is, not in our own name on the basis of who we are (John 14:14).
2. *Those who come in faith.* (Matthew 21:22) We must have a believing heart if our prayers are to be answered. Our faith grows through the Word of God (Romans 10:17). The more we learn of the faithfulness of God and His Word, the more we experience the reality of His love, and grace, and

power in prayer. We cannot manufacture or conjure up faith. It is only given from God as we rely on His Word and His faithfulness.

REASONS FOR PRAYER

Prayer glorifies God. "After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: 'Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ...'" (John 17:1). *All prayer as well as all acts and thought of life, should have for their chief end the glory of God. Anything less than this is unworthy of those who claim to know and serve Him.* (When You Pray, Harold Lindsell)

Prayer fulfills God's command.

"Pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We should pray because our loving Father has commanded us to pray without ceasing and because He delights in our fellowship.

Prayer is having fellowship with God. God waits anxiously for us to come to Him in prayer. It is incredible but God wants our fellowship. "... the prayer of the upright pleases Him" (Proverbs 15:8).

Prayer is following the example of our Lord. Jesus Christ made prayer a priority. If He was so dependent upon this fellowship in prayer alone with His Father, how much more should we be. "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed" (Luke 5:16).

Prayer is following the examples of the disciples and others. The lives of the disciples, and the biographies of great Christians who have done great things for God through the centuries, all testify to the necessity of prayer. "They all joined together consistently in prayer" (Acts 1:14).

Prayer achieves results for the glory of God. Prayer does change things. Prayer is the divinely ordained means that

Prayer

God uses to accomplish His mighty operations on this earth. The Bible records that weather was changed because people prayed. People were released from prison because of prayer. God is still in the prayer answering business. Prayer is the major means of becoming a fruitful witness for Christ. The divine order is: first talk to God about men, and then talk to men about God. "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father" (John 14:13).

Prayers nurtures spiritual growth. Just as a child needs food to grow physically, so we need food to grow spiritually. Prayer, which involves our talking to God and God talking to us through His Word, is our major source of spiritual food. We can miss a day without apparent ill effects, but if we continue this practice, we shall become undernourished, losing the strength to live a victorious life and to maintain boldness for a vital witness for Christ. "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, to that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

WHOM WE PRAY TO

Through the centuries of time since man was created, people have called upon someone or something to guide their lives. Man instinctively prays, even to idols, false gods, angels, or dead saints. There is a danger in ignorant prayer. That is why we must realize that we are to pray to the one true God of the Bible. He is the only one who will hear our prayers and answer them. We pray to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

What do the following verses say about how we are to pray?
Matthew 6:9

John 16:24

What do these Scriptures say about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our prayer life?
Romans 8:26,27

We pray to the one who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Creator of heaven and earth.

WHEN TO PRAY

Continually:

There is a sense in which we can pray without ceasing-- if we talk to God about everything that happens during the day. We need to see everything in relation to God, and to converse with Him about it (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

At times set alone:

1. We should also set apart specific times each day for prayer. Reading and studying the Bible help to

prepare us for prayer. Therefore, it is a good idea to pray with an open Bible. As we talk to God, we allow Him to talk to us through His Word.

- 2. It is a good idea to keep a prayer journal of specific prayer requests and God's special answers.
- 3. It is helpful to have a daily prayer plan.

With others:

Group prayer should also be a vital part of the Christian's prayer life.

- 1. Group prayer meetings are often dull and unattractive because Christians who participate do not have a vital personal prayer life.
- 2. In spontaneous or conversational prayer, each one prays briefly about one area of praise or petition at a time. Each one may pray several times, as directed by the Spirit.

For example, one person may begin, "Lord, I love You." Another follows, "Thank You that You are here today and that we can talk to You, knowing that You hear us." Another, "Thank You for Your love that sent the Lord Jesus to die for my sins." One quotes the psalmist, "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.." Another may admit, "Lord I confess that I didn't want to come here tonight, but thank You that I am here and that You have spoken to me." Another petitions, "I pray that You will draw my friend, Jim, to Yourself, so that he may experience the new birth and become a vital witness and disciple for You." Another agrees, "I agree with this prayer, Father. Show us how we can approach him with the Gospel soon."

The same person may feel impressed to pray a number of times. However, each prayer should be short, to the point, and based upon the Word of God.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN PRAYER

The first letters of the following four words form the word "ACTS." Used as a mental guide for prayer, this can help you maintain a balanced prayer life.

Adoration: Acknowledge God's character and attributes. **R**eflect on God Himself. **P**raise Him for His love, His power and majesty, His wonderful gift of Christ. **W**hy is adoration important?
1 Chronicles 29:11

Psalm 145:1-6

Confession: Confess your sins to God. (Some prefer to do this first.) Admit to God where you have sinned. Be honest and humble. Remember He knows you and still loves you.
Why is confession important?
1 John 1:9

Psalm 32:5

Prayer

Thanksgiving: Express thanks for things for which you are grateful. Tell God how grateful you are for everything He has allowed, even the unpleasant things. Your thankfulness may help you see His purposes.
Why is thanksgiving important?
Ephesians 5:20

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Psalms 100:4,5

Supplication: Ask God to provide for your needs and desires. Make specific requests. Pray for others first, then yourself. What are some things we should ask God for?
Colossians 1:9-12

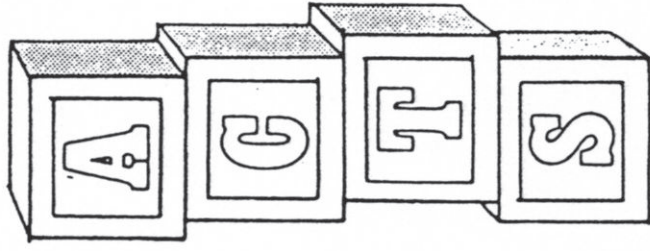
Colossians 4:2-4

Prayer

Why is supplication important?
Matthew 9:37,38

Matthew 7:7-8

The Building Blocks of Prayer:



HOW TO PRAY WITH CONFIDENCE

Six imperatives must be followed before we can expect answers to our prayers:

Submission: We should come to God in total meekness and complete surrender to His will. How does Matthew 26:39 show submission?

Abide: What does Jesus say about abiding?

John 15:7

If our lives are totally yielded to Him and His Word abides in us so that we know His will, we can ask anything we wish because our will is to do His will. Abiding is simply walking in the Spirit with no unconfessed sin and with a spirit of total availability to God. What does Scripture say about unconfessed sin? Psalm 66:18

Ask: If we expect answers to our prayers, what must we do? James 4:2b,3

What did Jesus say about answers to prayer?
John 14:14

John 16:24

Believe: What does Jesus promise?
Matthew 21:22

God does not require us to have a great faith. We simply are to have faith in a great God. What if we doubt?
James 1:6,7

We must be in tune with the Holy Spirit. We cannot be at the controls of your own life and still pray in faith. A life of faith is experienced only by those who walk in obedience.

Receive: By faith we receive the answer to our request. If we know that we are abiding in Christ, that we are controlled by the Holy Spirit, and that we are praying according to the Word and will of God, we can expect God to answer our prayers. Then we should be prepared to receive His answers. Claim the answer to each request and

begin to thank God for answered prayer.

Experience: Whatever we vividly envision, ardently desire, sincerely believe, and enthusiastically act upon must inevitably come to pass-- assuming there is scriptural authority for it.

1. Imagine that your prayer is answered.
2. Desire the actualization of that scene-- ask God for it.
3. Believe that God will enable you to accomplish all that He has commanded you to do.
4. Act upon that for which God leads you to pray. (ie. mobilize yourself and others to help fulfill the Great Commission - Matthew 28:19,20). Claim as a part of the fulfillment of the Great Commission whatever sphere of influence God lays on your heart.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What is prayer?

2. On the basis of Scripture, who is qualified to pray and to expect God to answer?

3. Why should you pray?

4. Why pray in the name of Jesus?

5. Define "pray without ceasing."

6. Why is it important to have a definite time set aside daily for prayer?

7. What is the value of small group prayer?

8. Define the four aspects of prayer suggested by the letters of "ACTS."

Prayer

9. Why is faith a prerequisite for answered prayer?
Where do we get faith?

10. How is abiding in Christ related to praying in faith?

11. How are the Scriptures related to the prayer of faith?

12. How does the Holy Spirit relate to the Christian's prayer life?

Prayer

13. Why is prayer basic to evangelism and the fulfillment of the Great Commission?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Power Thru Prayer , E. M. Bounds

What Happens When Women Pray , Evelyn Christenson

Jesus Teaches on Prayer , Ray Stedman