

LESSON 2

How to Pray for Ministry

Ephesians 6:18–20

Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. For this I am an ambassador in chains.

Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should,

Hebrews 11:8–16.

Class Overview: This lesson emphasizes that prayer is not just a private devotion but the lifeblood of ministry. From Ephesians 6:18–20, we see that prayer expresses our constant dependence on God, our intercession for fellow believers, and our need for boldness to proclaim the gospel. Just as Scripture equips us for good works, prayer empowers us to carry them out. Ministry without prayer becomes self-reliant and weak, but when we pray in the Spirit, we invite God's strength, wisdom, and courage into our service. This class will challenge us to move beyond routine prayers to intentional, ministry-shaped prayer that sustains, unites, and emboldens the people of God.

Class Objectives:

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. Explain why prayer is essential to the life of a Christian and to the work of ministry, based on Ephesians 6:18–20.
2. Describe what it means to “pray at all times in the Spirit” and identify practical ways to build continual prayer into daily life.
3. Learn how to pray not only for personal needs but also for fellow believers, leaders, and ministries, following Paul's example.
4. Understand that courage in sharing the gospel comes through prayer, and commit to praying for boldness in personal ministry opportunities.
5. Apply specific practices such as keeping a ministry prayer list,

praying Scripture, and praying with others to strengthen individual and congregational ministry.

6. Choose one specific ministry situation and commit it to daily prayer throughout the week, looking for ways God answers.

Introduction

I SIT IN A LOT OF MEETINGS. Hours are poured into planning: scheduling events, building class objectives, and planning out lesson series. One of the things I appreciate about our shepherds is their dedication to prayer. One of them will usually say something like this before things get going: “Before we do anything, we need to spend time in prayer.” We pray for God to go before us, for the Spirit to work on honest hearts, and for the courage to speak and lead. That opening prayer often changes the entire tone of the meeting. The plans we make are helpful, but the power comes when we put the work in God’s hands. Conversations open up that were never expected. Opportunities unfold that we hadn’t planned for. The difference isn’t our preparation; it is God’s provision, accessed through prayer.

Prayer is not a formality before ministry; it is the lifeblood of ministry. Without prayer, even our best efforts are limited to human strength. With prayer, we invite the power of God into our work. That’s why Paul, after describing the armor of God in Ephesians 6, immediately says, *Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints* (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer is not just something we do before the battle; it is part of the battle. It is how we stay connected to the Commander and receive strength for the fight.

Think about it: Jesus Himself lived this truth. Before choosing the twelve apostles, He spent the whole night in prayer (Luke 6:12). Before facing the cross, He poured out His heart in Gethsemane, submitting His will to the Father (Matthew 26:36–39). If the Son of God needed prayer to sustain Him in ministry, how much more do we?

As we studied previously, Scripture is the tool God places in our hands to equip us. But prayer is what keeps us connected to the One who gives

that tool its power. Prayer is dependence. Prayer is surrender. Prayer is the ongoing reminder that ministry is not about what we can do for God, but about what God can do through us.

So, as we begin this lesson, let's ask ourselves an honest question: *When it comes to ministry, am I leaning more on my plans, or on God's power?*

Prayer as Constant Dependence

1. At all times.

Paul begins this section by urging believers to *pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request* (Ephesians 6:18a). The phrase “at all times” reminds us that prayer is not meant to be an occasional act but a continual posture. Just as breathing is constant for physical life, prayer is constant for spiritual life. A ministry that is not rooted in prayer quickly becomes self-driven and fragile.

2. In the Spirit.

The key phrase here is *in the Spirit*. Paul is not simply commanding us to pray often but to pray in step with the Spirit of God. Romans 8:26–27 tells us that the Spirit helps us in our weakness, even interceding for us when we do not know how to pray. That means prayer is more than us bringing requests; it is the Spirit shaping our hearts and aligning us with God's will.

Think of a soldier on the battlefield. No matter how strong or skilled he is, he cannot fight alone. He needs constant communication with his commander. If the line of communication is cut, he quickly becomes vulnerable. That's the picture Paul is painting. Prayer is our line of communication with God, our source of wisdom, strength, and direction. When we pray at all times in the Spirit, we are refusing to fight in our own power, we are drawing from the limitless resources of God.

3. Practical implications.

Praying always doesn't mean we are always on our knees with eyes closed. It means we live with a continual awareness of God's presence, lifting up situations to Him throughout the day. It means beginning ministry tasks with prayer, whether that's teaching a class, visiting a

sick friend, or serving a meal. It means pausing to ask for God's wisdom before answering a tough question. It means seeing prayer as our first response, not our last resort.

When we live in constant dependence through prayer, we acknowledge that ministry is not about what we can accomplish for God, but about what God can accomplish through us. As Jesus said in John 15:5, "*Apart from me you can do nothing.*" Prayer keeps us connected to the Vine so that our ministry bears fruit.

Prayer as Intercession

Paul continues in Ephesians 6:18, *With every prayer and request, stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.* Here, the focus shifts outward. Prayer is not only about our own dependence on God but also about lifting up others before His throne. Ministry is a team effort, and prayer is the glue that holds the team together.

Notice Paul's emphasis on "all perseverance and intercession for all the saints." This is not casual or occasional prayer; it is steady, persistent, ongoing prayer for others in the body of Christ. Ministry is never just about "me and God"; it is about "us and God." We are called to carry one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and one of the primary ways we do that is through prayer.

Consider how different the church would be if our first instinct when hearing about someone's struggles was to pray. Not just to promise prayer but to actually stop and do it. When Paul writes to the Colossians, he says, *we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord* (Colossians 1:9–10). Paul's intercession teaches us how to pray: not only for relief from problems but for growth, strength, and fruitfulness in ministry.

Imagine a soldier on the battlefield who not only fights for himself but also keeps watch over his comrades. He notices when someone is weak or exposed, and he calls for support. That's the essence of intercessory prayer. It's looking out for others, asking God to strengthen them when they are vulnerable, and celebrating when they stand firm.

In practice, this means our prayers should go beyond just health and physical needs (though those matter) to include spiritual concerns: boldness, perseverance, wisdom, faith, and fruitfulness in ministry. It involves developing the habit of asking others, “How can I pray for you in your service to God this week?” It also includes lifting up leaders, teachers, parents, new Christians, and even those who are struggling, so that no one in the body fights alone.

When we pray for each other in this way, we not only help carry one another’s burdens but also knit our hearts together in love. Intercession strengthens unity, deepens compassion, and reminds us that ministry is not a solo mission; it’s the entire body working together through God’s power.

Prayer as Boldness for the Gospel

After calling us to constant dependence and intercession, Paul makes a personal request: *Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should* (Ephesians 6:19–20).

It is striking that Paul, the seasoned apostle who had preached on three missionary journeys, planted churches across the Roman world, and endured countless hardships for Christ, still asks for prayer. And not just any prayer; he asks specifically for boldness. If Paul needed courage to speak, how much more do we?

Paul’s request reminds us that proclaiming the gospel is not just a matter of skill, knowledge, or personality. It requires divine help. Fear is natural. Rejection is painful. Opposition is real. But boldness comes when we lean on God through prayer. The early church understood this well. In Acts 4, after the authorities threatened Peter and John, the believers prayed, *Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness* (Acts 4:29). The result? *They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly* (Acts 4:31).

Think of it this way: boldness is not the absence of fear, but the presence of faith. Prayer transforms fear into courage because it reminds us that

the power of the gospel does not rest on us, but on God. When we pray for boldness, we are not asking to become fearless; we are asking for the strength to be faithful despite fear.

In practice, this means our prayers for ministry should not only focus on open doors but also on the courage to walk through them. We may pray for opportunities to invite a neighbor to worship, for wisdom to answer a friend's questions, or for courage to stand firm at work or school when our faith is challenged. Boldness is needed not only in pulpits and mission fields but also in kitchens, classrooms, and office cubicles. Wherever the gospel needs to be spoken, prayer for boldness must precede it.

Paul's example demonstrates the humility of even the greatest servant of Christ; he recognized he could not do it alone. He asked his brothers and sisters to support him with prayer so that the mystery of Christ could be clearly and fearlessly proclaimed. That same call still resonates with us today. We need to be people who pray not only for health, safety, and provision but also for the courage to speak and live out the gospel as we should.

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Practical Application:

How to Pray for Ministry

We've seen that prayer is our lifeline to God. It expresses our dependence, lifts up others, and gives us boldness to share the gospel. But how do we put this into practice? Here are several simple yet powerful ways:

1. Start Every Ministry with Prayer

Before teaching a class, visiting a friend, serving at a meal, or stepping into a difficult conversation, pause to pray. Ask God for wisdom, love, and strength. Prayer re-centers us on His power, not ours.

2. Create a Ministry Prayer List

Go beyond physical needs. Write down the names of people you are trying to reach with the gospel, ministries you serve in, leaders in your congregation, and fellow Christians who are struggling. Make it a habit to lift these regularly before God.

3. Pray Scripture Back to God

Use passages like Ephesians 6:18–20, Colossians 4:2–4, or Acts 4:29–31 as templates for your prayers. When we pray God’s Word, we align our requests with His will and promises.

4. Pray with Others, Not Just Alone

Prayer meetings, small groups, or even a quick phone call with a friend can strengthen ministry. Interceding together deepens fellowship and multiplies encouragement. Remember, Paul didn’t just pray; he asked others to pray for him.

5. Pray Specifically for Boldness

Instead of only praying for “open doors,” pray for courage to walk through them when God opens the way. Ask God for clarity in your words and faithfulness in your actions, even when it’s difficult.

Challenge

This week, commit to praying daily for one specific ministry situation in your life. Ask God for strength to serve, for someone else to be encouraged, or for boldness to share the gospel. Write it down, pray over it consistently, and look for how God answers.

Conclusion

Prayer is not an accessory to ministry; it is the lifeline of ministry. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:18–20 that prayer is constant dependence on God, intercession for one another, and a plea for boldness to proclaim the gospel. Without prayer, even the most gifted servant quickly runs out of strength. But with prayer, ordinary Christians are empowered to do extraordinary work, because God Himself supplies what is needed.

We saw in Lesson 1 that Scripture equips us for every good work. Prayer now shows us how those works are carried out: not in our own power, but in God’s. Ministry is never about what we can accomplish for Him, but about what He can accomplish through us. Prayer keeps us humble, united, and courageous.

So here is the challenge: let’s not just talk about prayer for ministry, let’s practice it. This week, choose one ministry situation, a person you’re reaching out to, a work you’re serving in, or a fear you’re facing,

and commit it to prayer every day. Pray for yourself, for your brothers and sisters, and for boldness to act. And then watch as God takes our weakness and uses it for His glory.

For Discussion

1. Think back to the story in the introduction. Why do you think we are sometimes tempted to rush into ministry without pausing to pray first?

2. What does it mean to “pray at all times in the Spirit”? How can we develop a habit of prayer that feels natural and constant rather than forced or occasional?

3. When you think about your own prayer life, how much of it is focused on your needs versus the needs of others? What are some specific ways we can grow in interceding for fellow Christians?

4. Paul, a seasoned apostle, still asked others to pray for his boldness. What does that teach us about our own need for prayer in evangelism? Can you recall a time when prayer gave you courage to speak when you were afraid?

5. Which of the five practices from the application section (start every ministry with prayer, prayer lists, praying Scripture, praying with others, praying for boldness) do you find most helpful? Which one would you like to begin practicing this week

6. If you were to commit to praying daily this week for one ministry situation in your life, what would it be? How might sharing that commitment with others help you stay faithful to it?

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