

Welcome to Digital Discipleship, a weekly video teaching from Pastor Shawn and a downloadable weekly devotional guide. We pray that you will grow stronger in your walk with Jesus as you lean into these teachings and devotions.

DIGITAL DISCIPLESHIP – LESSON 10 –

Prayer Changes Everything!

Day 1

Renew the Mind

Introduction

1. In this lesson on prayer as asking, we'll turn to the template prayer found in Luke 11, as well as to the parable and two poems about prayer, which follow.
2. **Luke 11:2-4 (NIV)** *He [Jesus] said to them, "When you pray, say: "'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. ³ Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."*
3. We discovered in Devotional #6 that there are six key parts to this pattern prayer:
 - a. Pray for God's name to be hallowed
 - b. Pray for God's Kingdom to come
 - c. Pray for God's will to be done on earth
 - d. Pray for our daily needs
 - e. Pray for daily forgiveness
 - f. Pray for protection in trials
4. It is true that all six of these are "asks" of one sort or another. In this lesson we're addressing our requests for "daily bread" (Luke 11:3).
5. Is Jesus really saying that daily bread is the only need we can pray for? We think not.
6. Remember, this is a TEMPLATE prayer. This was really a simple tool (love that!) which Jesus crafted for them and us, to guide us in our praying!
7. It wasn't intended to be an exhaustive list of everything we can or should pray for.
8. Of course, we should know that the biggest needs really are not things that impact just this lifetime, but things we need that will affect the next as well! E.g. things such as humility, holiness, self-control.
9. We see this, for example, in Paul's passage on spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18).
10. He instructs us to put on the armor, and then in v. 18 tells us how to put it on.
11. **Ephesians 6:18 (ESV)** *... praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.*
12. Note that Paul mentions "praying" as the means by which the armor of faith, righteousness, salvation and so on, may be put on. Again, these are things that impact the life to come!
13. See how Paul himself prays for others to abound in eternal treasures.
14. **Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV)** *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God. (also: Eph. 3:16-19; Col. 1:9-12)*

A. The necessity of intercessory prayer

1. If we believe that God is sovereign, then why is it necessary to pray – to ask?
2. The answer lies in God's original plan when He created man and woman.
3. God delegated authority and responsibility for the care and governance of all creation, to Adam and Eve, and their descendants.
4. **Genesis 1:26 (NIV)** *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*
5. Even the Psalmist echoed this ...
6. **Psalms 115:16 (NIV)** *The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given (assigned) to man.*
7. The Hebrew word, "nathan," here translated "given," means to assign.
8. God didn't give away ownership of the earth, but He did assign responsibility of governing it to humanity
9. **Genesis 2:15 (NIV)** *The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*
10. As such Adam was to represent the will of God here on earth.
11. How things went on earth, for better or worse, depended on the first couple and their offspring.
12. This is staggering, and a key reason for the necessity of prayer!
13. Though God is sovereign and all-powerful, He limited Himself concerning the affairs of this earth, to working THROUGH human beings!
14. **He told us to pray:** Your kingdom come, Your will be done (Matthew 6:10).
15. Surely, He wouldn't want us to waste our time asking for something that was going to happen anyways?
16. Didn't He tell us to ask for daily bread (Matthew 6:11)? Yet, He knows our needs before we even ask.
17. Didn't He tell us to ask that laborers be sent into the harvest? (Matthew 9:38)
18. But doesn't the Lord of the harvest want laborers even more than we?
19. **E.g. Story of Elijah's prayers** (1 Kings 17-18)
 - a. According to James 5, Elijah prayed that the heavens wouldn't rain on the land for three years.
 - b. After the three-year drought, God said to Elijah ... **1 Kings 18:1 (NIV)** *"Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."*
 - c. After the "fire" contest on Mount Carmel, Elijah prayed, and it rained!
 - d. According to verse 1, whose idea and will was it to send rain? God's!
 - e. BUT it required Elijah's perseverance in prayer to enact God's will here on earth!
 - f. **James 5:17-18 (NIV)** *Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.*
 - g. A man just like us:
 - h. Did he ever sin? Was he ever discouraged? Did he ever want to quit?!
 - i. The Scripture says YES to all these – and yet he accomplished this!
 - j. How? He prayed earnestly!
 - k. He prayed once, then sent his servant to look. No cloud.
 - l. He prayed again, then sent his servant – still no cloud.
 - m. He prayed a 3rd time, then a 4th time, a 5th and 6th time – still no cloud!
 - n. Each time he went back to prayer (that's earnest prayer!)
 - o. The 7th time, the servant said: "I see a cloud the size of a fist!"
 - p. Look at Elijah's response: **1 Kings 18:44 (NIV)** *"Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'"*
 - q. A little puffy white cloud – flee before the downpour stops you?! This is hilarious! Or is it?!
 - r. **1 Kings 18:45 (NIV)** *Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came on and Ahab rode off to Jezreel.*
 - s. This isn't just a cute bed-time story about fire coming down from heaven and consuming a water-logged sacrifice and altar, or about praying for a drought or praying for rain! NO!
 - t. This was about advancing God's kingdom!
 - u. The northern kingdom of Israel had turned from God, which is why Elijah later complained that he was the only one who had not bowed his knee to Baal.
 - v. But God's judgment of drought got the attention of the nation, which made the contest on Mount Carmel possible.

- w. Through this supernatural exhibition Elijah was able to display the power of God, in stark contrast to the powerless efforts of the four hundred prophets of Baal.
- x. How did the people respond to God's spectacular manifestation?
- y. **1 Kings 18:39 (NIV)** *When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!"* WOW!
- z. That's what it was all about! And all because Elijah enacted God's will through obedience and intercession!
- 20. When **Abraham** interceded on behalf of Lot, God spared Lot from the destruction that came on Sodom and Gomorrah.
- 21. When **Moses** interceded, God changed his mind about blotting out Israel in the wilderness.
- 22. When **Daniel** interceded, God set in motion the deliverance of Israel from Babylonian captivity.
- 23. When the **Church** prayed, Peter was set free from prison!
- 24. God will not eliminate the intercessor!
- 25. Some things God WILL NOT move, UNLESS WE PRAY!**
- 26. Apparently, our prayers do make a difference – a **HUGE** difference! It changes everything!
- 27. But we have a problem in the Church today; similar to what Isaiah faced in his ...
- 28. Isaiah 59 describes society as we know it today: unrighteousness, injustice, and evil in great proportions – note God's reaction ...
- 29. **Isaiah 59:15-16 (ESV)** *The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. ¹⁶ He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede*
- 30. The world, and Christians too, see terrible things going on and ask: "Why isn't God doing something about all this?"
- 31. But God is astonished that there is no one interceding, and asks: "Where are my followers? How can they be doing nothing?!"
- 32. He moves in the affairs of people according to the degree we pray, and how specifically we pray.
- 33. The Lord's Prayer is not so much a prayer as it is an explanation of how the earthly realm does business with earth!
- 34. **Matthew 6:9-10 (NIV)** *This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*
- 35. He wants us to pray for His will to be done in every area of our lives, in our family, in our friends' and acquaintances' lives, in cities, in countries and in every situation!
- 36. He has given us a job of being watchmen of prayer.
- 37. **Isaiah 62:6-7 (NIV)** *I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, ⁷ and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.*
- 38. We are to ask and keep on asking until He answers or until He tells us we have asked enough – "Give Him no rest!"
- 39. Prayers of faith are not praying once but praying THROUGH!**

Reflecting and Reviewing

- 1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
- 2. Why is intercessory prayer (asking), necessary? What does it accomplish?
- 3. What biblical examples of intercessory prayer are used today?

Life Application

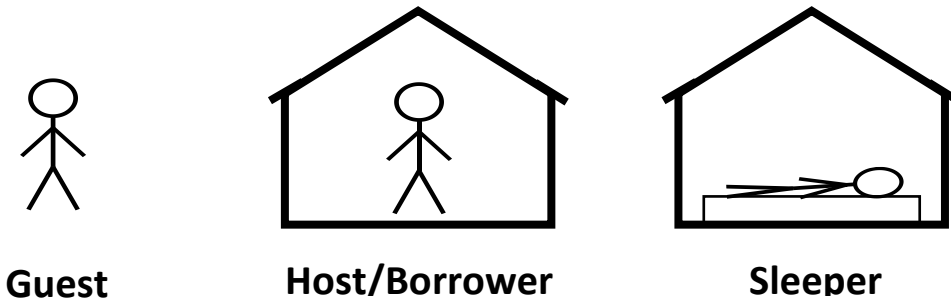
- 1. Can you think of a time in your life when you persevered in asking God for something that built His kingdom in some way? Write down what happened.
- 2. Call, text or email a few friends. Ask them if they have something to share in response to Question 1.

Day 2

Renew the Mind

God DESIRES to answer your prayers

1. A key reason we don't ask in prayer is because we're not convinced that God WANTS to answer.
2. In response, Jesus told the parable of the friend who came to ask for bread at midnight.
3. **Luke 11:5-7 (NIV)** *Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'* ⁷ *"Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'*
4. Below is a simple diagram to help us remain clear as to the subjects in the story we are discussing.



5. Jesus is asking, "Can you imagine going to a neighbor, asking for help to entertain a friend and getting such a response?!"
6. The middle Eastern responsibility for his guest is legendary; a guest is not just a guest of one home, but the entire community!
7. The guest arrives at the host's home late in the evening, but the host has nothing adequate.
8. When the host goes to his sleeping neighbor, the host is simply asking the sleeper to fulfill his duty to the guest of the village. Refusal in such a case is unthinkable.
9. Jesus continues the parable, "And can you imagine that the neighbor offers such silly excuses about sleeping children and a barred door?!"
10. The scenario is so unthinkable, that it humorous to the listeners!
11. Then Jesus brought home the lesson of the parable saying ...
12. **Luke 11:8 (NASB)** *I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence (??) he will get up and give him as much as he needs.*
13. The significance of the passage hangs on the meaning of the key Greek word "anaideia," translated persistence, which can have two meanings:
 - a. Shamelessness – a negative quality
 - b. Persistence – a positive quality
14. The meaning attached to this word turns this parable in different directions – so, we have to get it right.
15. With only one exception from ancient Greek & the Greek Old Testament translation, this word is translated as a negative (shame), never meaning persistence.
16. It wouldn't even make sense culturally, as a guest in the Middle East wouldn't have to ask but once!
17. The point, then, isn't that the guest receives because of the persistence of the host.
18. The guest receives because of the shamelessness of the SLEEPER!
19. The sleeper knows the host must gather up the essentials for the banquet from the various neighbors.
20. If the sleeper refused the request of anything so humble as a loaf of bread the host would continue his rounds cursing the stinginess of the sleeper, who would not get up even to fulfil this small request.
21. The story would be all over the village by morning.
22. The sleeper would be met with cries of "shame" everywhere he went.
23. Because he wants to avoid being shamed, the sleeper WILL rise and grant whatever the host borrower wants!
24. This parable uses the lesser to greater argument ...
 - a. **IF** it is true that the shameless sleeping neighbor will get up and get the bread, just to save face,
 - b. **THEN** how much more will God, WHO LOVES YOU, grant your requests

25. YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER DESIRES TO ANSWER YOUR PRAYERS – SO KEEP ON ASKING!

God offers to keep on answering and answering and answering

1. **Luke 11:9-10 (NIV)** *So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*
2. This short poem with a three-fold exhortation follows up well from the parable.
3. Since God's honor is at stake, He really desires to answer His children!
4. We have three verbs in v. 9: Here are some things that I (Pastor Shawn) have asked for:
 - a. **Ask** – for something that someone else can provide (God in this case).
 - I have asked for food and clothing when we had none
 - I have asked him for financial provision when I had no money in my bank account.
 - I have asked Him for houses, for income, for restoration of health, for lands and buildings, for employees, for increased church giving, etc.
 - But I have also asked him for inner healing and deliverance, for increased joy and peace and hope, for character traits like truth-telling and self-control
 - I have often asked him for things such as wisdom, insight, understanding and direction
 - b. **Seek** – for what has been lost
 - Have you prayed for something you have misplaced? It's lost, you just can't find it. I have.
 - Have you lost a wallet or luggage or something else valuable? Ask. He'll see you through!
 - How about valuable ideas or thoughts that you either wrote down somewhere or was simply tucked away in your mind somewhere? Often. Ask, He says.
 - How about your health, which you lost? Many times, I have prayed for my health and was granted it just in time for the ministry God asked me to do. Sometimes AS I ministered!
 - Have you prayed for a son or daughter, a spouse, a granddaughter or grandson who was lost? Oh my, I get choked up just thinking about that. SEEK. SEEK. SEEK. Through prayer! You don't know the way back to them because they're lost. Ask the Lord for the next step and then the next and the next. Don't quit seeking through prayer!
 - You've wasted many years away due to a lukewarm faith – much time has been lost. Seek the Lord for how He can restore some of what was lost. Ask Him to show you what to do.
 - You've lost the fullness of the Spirit – seek for it again in prayer!
 - c. **Knock** – on a door to gain admission to a closed opportunity. I have often asked for favor with different kinds of people and leaders. You see, when you ask for favor, you are really asking the Lord to open the door to what someone else has the key to. I have asked God ...
 - To open the way for me to pastor Main Street when it didn't seem possible at first.
 - To grant favor from government officials for land acquisitions and changes to zoning bylaws
 - To give me favor with people who God could use to get jobs done.
5. All three verbs are in the present Greek tense and active voice, meaning that a better rendering of what Jesus is getting at would read: "keep on asking;" "keep on seeking;" and "keep on knocking."
6. It might appear to some that what Jesus is getting at is persistence.
7. Though persistence isn't wrong, I think that the context here would point us in another direction.
8. **I believe that what Jesus is saying is that the appeals of asking, seeking and knocking to God will work again and again and again – you'll just keep on receiving, keep on finding and keep on having doors opened to you!**
9. How many, many prayers of yours has He answered! Learn to take the time to write your prayers down and then track them as they are answered.
10. There are two benefits that I have gleaned from this exercise:
 - a. **First:** it generates gratitude in our hearts

- Begin your devotional time by journaling answers from the day before, which makes you more aware of what the Lord is really doing in your life.
 - This generates gratitude, which then prepares me to worship!
 - That's the value of gratitude – it leads us easily to worship
- b. **Second:** it inspires us to pray more
- When you see the growing list and sometimes review what you have written (by then already forgotten), you will be really inspired to ask even more!
 - Through this, the Spirit keeps challenging you to ask for more and more.
11. Upon reflection, I wonder how many more prayers He would have answered if we had only asked!
 12. Apparently, that has been a problem for many of God's people over history.
 13. **James 4:2 (NIV)** *You do not have, because you do not ask God.*
 14. But there is ONE MORE THING WE MUST not overlook
 15. Jesus said, **EVERYONE** who asks, seeks and knocks, will receive!
 16. This isn't a promise just for the mature or holy or long-term Christian! This is a promise for all believers!
 17. Of course, asking for the wrong sort of thing will not get us anything from God, as God desires to give us good things.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. How does the parable noted today emphasize that God desires to answer our prayers?
3. What is the point of Jesus' command to us to ask, seek and knock?

Life Application

1. Do you desire to pray? If not, don't feel guilty. Just do something about it:
 - a. Make that your #1 prayer request
 - b. Ask your spouse or friend to begin praying for you to have a desire
 - c. Track your answers to prayer in a Devotional Journal every day
 - d. Make sure you BEGIN with thanksgiving of specific things from the day, previous day, week, previous week, answered prayers and so on! That will jump start your prayer time!
 - e. Make sure you include listening prayer. Nothing like hearing from the Spirit Himself!

Day 3

Renew the Mind

God desires to give us GOOD gifts

1. The second poem says that God not only desires to give, but to give GOOD gifts
2. **Luke 11:11-13 (NIV)** *Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, HOW MUCH MORE will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*
3. First, if an earthly father will only give appropriate gifts to his son, HOW MUCH MORE will the heavenly Father give appropriate gifts to us, His children.
4. Second, if an earthly father will give good gifts to his son, HOW MUCH MORE will the heavenly Father give good gifts to us, His children.
5. Though Luke doesn't actually say that the Father will give "good gifts," he highlights the point with a powerful illustration.
6. He says that God will even give the Holy Spirit to those who ask!
7. The Early Church couldn't think of a better gift to have been given than the Holy Spirit Himself!
8. So, Luke says, "how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"
9. See what Peter calls the Holy Spirit in his Pentecost sermon ...
10. **Acts 2:38 (NIV)** *Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*
11. Paul, expressing a similar thing in his letter to the Romans, asks the supreme rhetorical question ...
12. **Romans 8:32 (NIV)** *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*
13. The point is powerful: if God the Father will give us even His own Son and the Holy Spirit, then there isn't ANYTHING in the entire world He wouldn't give us (of course, it can't be a "scorpion" or "snake" – something that would hurt us!). WOW!
14. Our God is NOT slow to give! He promises to continually give us GOOD gifts.

God promised to answer our prayers – ALWAYS!

1. God wants us to pray unceasingly.
2. **1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NIV)** ... *pray continually.*
3. Why? Because He ALWAYS answers our prayers! ALWAYS!
4. Let's look at a sampling ...
 - a. **Matthew 21:22 (NIV)** *If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.*
 - b. **1 John 5:14-15 (NIV)** *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.*
 - c. See what Jesus says about this ...
 - d. **John 15:7 (NIV)** *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.*
 - e. **John 16:23-24 (NIV)** *In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.*
5. And, according to what it says below, He never gives us LESS than what we ask! In fact, He may (and often does) give us MORE than we ask!
6. **Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)** *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine ...*
7. Have you ever received something in prayer that you may have thought about but didn't pray for?!
8. Of course, you have!
9. **E.g.** From Pastor Ray, Founder of Church Renewal - Fundraising campaign for Retreat & Training Center.
 - a. In May 2016 the Board gave the go ahead to build the Retreat and Training Center for a cost of \$7.3 million.
 - b. In April 2017, having just ended the previous fundraising drive for Phase 3, we launched another fundraising drive to help pay for the Retreat and Training Center which was already well under construction.

- c. When the pledges came in, I was disappointed and thought to myself, "I wish the pledges had been at least \$1 million more."
- d. However, the Lord had provided so many millions over the past few years, to do what He had asked us to do, that I was still very, very happy.
- e. Four weeks AFTER the campaign, we suddenly received another pledge in the offering basket.
- f. And it was from one couple for ... \$1 million!
- g. And the couple gave the \$1 million in December 2017!
- h. Immeasurably more than I had asked for; but it was what I had consciously wished for!
10. Have you ever received something from God that you couldn't have even imagined?! I have! OFTEN!
11. God really desires to answer our prayers! And He has promised to answer our prayers.
12. And no small wonder, as in His infinite wisdom He has linked His grand purposes to our prayers!
13. No doubt it is a mystery of sorts that we await heaven to fully understand and appreciate.
14. Of course, as many have observed, at many of the key redemptive turning points in Luke-Acts, we find a mention of prayer.
 - a. While the people were at prayer the angel makes an announcement of the dawn of salvation to Zechariah (Luke 1:10, 13)
 - b. The early public identification of Jesus as Messiah when just born, was made by Anna, who had been in much prayer for years (Luke 2:36-38)
 - c. While Jesus is praying, the Spirit descends upon Him (Luke 3:21)
 - d. It is after Jesus prays that He chooses His disciples (Luke 6:12)
 - e. After Jesus prays, His disciples make a confession of His messiahship (Luke 9:18)
 - f. While Jesus is praying His disciples get a glimpse of His future glorification (Luke 9:28)
 - g. After He prays in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus faces the ordeal of death on the cross
 - h. After spending time in prayer, the risen Christ poured out His Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:14; 2:1)
 - i. The martyrdom of Stephen and spread of the gospel was attended by prayer (Acts 8:1,4; 11:19)
 - j. While praying, Peter was made aware that the Gentiles were also to be included in God's plan for salvation (Acts 10)
15. Not only will He often give us MORE than we ask, but He will often give us BETTER than we ask.
16. Three times Paul asked the Lord to remove the thorn in his flesh; but the Lord said He had something BETTER in mind!
17. **2 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV)** *To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.*
18. The Lord knew that Paul could lose his reward because of conceit, and so He gave Paul a thorn.
19. "The Lord cares more about the line of your eternity, than the dot of your present!"
20. Think about it: Paul is almost 2000 years into eternity already!
 - a. Do you think he remembers that thorn in the flesh now? And if he does, isn't it just a faint memory?!
 - b. Many women in the middle of labor will say: "I don't want to have this baby!" but at that point it is a little late isn't it?
 - c. But only a couple of weeks after all that pain, that same mother is so ecstatic about the baby, that they often are already yearning for another one!
 - d. Though the pain was very real, the memory had already faded!
 - e. Not only had the memory faded, but that the momentary pain had been more than worth it – having such a wonderful child!
 - f. **2 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)** *For our light and momentary troubles (ESV: "afflictions") are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*
21. And so, we see that God ALWAYS answers our prayers, and His answers are MORE and BETTER than we asked! So, ask away! Pray!
22. Don't worry about whether your request will be the right or wrong thing to ask, for if you ask for the wrong thing with the right heart, you will receive the right thing!

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What should motivate us to pray? What from today's reading can spur us on to pray?

3. Does God only give us what we ask for? Explain your answer.

Life Application

1. Throughout this lesson, we see the power of specific prayers. Specific prayers are natural for someone in a relationship with a Good Father. They also glorify God, in that we are more likely to praise Him when we see specific answers. Therefore, think of something specific that you can pray for. Record this somewhere that will help you to remember to pray about it every day.
2. What is something that you asked God for in the past, but received far more than you imagined or asked for?

Day 4

Renew the Mind

Boundary markers for answered prayer

1. From what Jesus said about prayer above, it might appear that prayer is a blank check from God.
2. Of course, we would be wrong to conclude this.
3. Three conditions, implicitly in the “Lord’s Prayer,” set out the boundaries for what guarantees answers to our prayers.

Marker 1: it must not dishonor God

- a. In the “Lord’s Prayer,” we’re told to pray, “Father, hallowed be your name.”
- b. Surely then, God will not grant petitions that would diminish His glory.

Marker 2: it must not impede His higher Kingdom purposes

- a. In the “Lord’s Prayer,” Jesus instructed us to pray “Your kingdom come.”
- b. Again, if that is how He wants us to pray, then He won’t grant requests contrary to this.

Marker 3: it must not hurt us, ultimately

- a. In the “Lord’s Prayer” Jesus taught us to pray, “And lead us not into temptation” (tests that will overwhelm or hurt us).
 - b. It becomes even more obvious in the 2nd poem of the three prayer messages in Luke.
 - c. **Luke 11:11-13 (NIV)** *Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*
 - d. Fish and eggs were common foods in Palestine, while serpents & scorpions were regular hazards.
 - e. If sinful human fathers wouldn’t give bad or hurtful gifts to their children, how much more will your heavenly Father not give bad gifts to you.
 - f. Paul had argued ...
 - g. **Romans 8:32 (NIV)** *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?!*
 - h. But don’t forget, sometimes “giving” us what is best for us may mean that He withholds something we have asked for.
 - i. **E.g.** Warren Buffet’s grandchildren were being interviewed
 - The interviewer asked what it was like to be the grandchild of such a wealthy man
 - One of the grandchildren explained that he paid for them to go to the university of their choice, but after that they were on their own.
 - Buffet understood that it wouldn’t be good to give his children and grandchildren everything, as it would hinder their ability to develop and grow.
 - j. Of course, when we say that God will not give us that which will hurt us, we are NOT saying that it isn’t God’s will for us to suffer in this lifetime!
 - k. On the contrary, God often allows such things in our lives to grow the kind of character that will result in much fruit and reward for eternity.
 - l. That’s why we included the word, “ultimately” in the condition above.
 - m. MUCH will be said about this in later lessons.
4. Before we end today, let’s address two objections that some raise.

Objection 1: Jesus said that He would answer any prayer in offered in His name

1. He did say that, didn’t He? Well yes, He did.
2. **John 14:14 (NIV)** *You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.* (also John 15:16; 16:23-24)
3. But what did He mean by that?
4. Did He mean that we should simply tack on the phrase, “in Jesus’ name” at the end of each prayer, and then it will happen, as though it is a formula? NO! That’s magic, not prayer!
5. In fact, none of the prayers recorded in Scripture have the phrase “in Jesus’ name” at the end of them (see Matthew 6:9-13; Acts 1:24-25; 4:24-30; 7:59; 9:13-14; Revelation 6:10; 22:20).
6. So, what does it mean, then?

First: it means praying in a way that is consistent with Jesus' character

- a. In the ancient world, the "name" of a person represented the person and therefore all of his character.
- b. To have a good name was to have a good reputation and better than anything else in life.
- c. **Proverbs 22:1 (NIV)** *A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.*
- d. And Jesus has a good name! The Psalmist says ...
- e. **Psalm 52:9 (NIV)** *I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good.*
- f. Paul rebuked those who were slandering the name of God among the Gentiles!
- g. **Romans 2:24 (NIV)** *God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.*
- h. Obviously then, if we are warned to stay away from behaviors that bring harm to His name, then our prayers must line up accordingly.

2.

Second: it means praying according to Jesus' will

- a. **1 John 5:14-15 (NIV)** *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.*
- b. This is slightly different than the first point.
- c. It is possible to pray consistent with Jesus' character, but it is not His will for us!
- d. **E.g.** Say, for example, that a young man is called to give up his career to follow God into full time ministry. Suppose that this young man refuses, and instead asks God to bless him and advance his career instead. He would not be asking then, according to God's will – "in Jesus' name."
- e. But here is the amazing thing: according to John, when we do pray according to His will, we have full confidence that we will receive what we asked for!
- f. But that assumes something – we need to know His will on a matter.
- g. And His Word tells us that we CAN and SHOULD know His will in these matters
- h. **James 1:5 (NIV)** *If any of you lacks wisdom, he SHOULD ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

Third: it means praying and acting with Jesus's authority

- a. When we pray consistent with Jesus' character and in line with His will for us, then we have His authorization and the accompanying power to carry it out!
- b. **Acts 3:6 (NIV)** *Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." And the lame man walked!*
- c. In Acts 4:7 the religious leaders asked the disciples by what power or authority they were preaching and performing miracles.
- d. The disciples said that they did it with authorization from Jesus, whom we know had commissioned them to go and preach the gospel and heal the sick.
- e. In another instance, Paul pronounced judgment "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:4) on a church member who was guilty of immorality.
- f. What Paul was saying was that he/they had authorization from Jesus to do that.
- g. It meant that Jesus was standing behind their prayers and actions.

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What are three boundary markers for answer prayer?
3. What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name? (there are three things shared in this lesson) Can we get anything we pray for in His name? Explain.

Life Application

1. Can you think of anything from your past that you prayed for, that contradicts one of the boundary markers shared in today's reading?

2. Consider something that you have been praying for recently. Does it fit in with the boundary markers that were shared today? Is this request consistent with praying in Jesus' Name? Ask the Holy Spirit if you need to adjust how you pray for this request.

Day 5

Renew the Mind

So then, why don't we pray?

1. **Pastor Vivian Fernandes in Mumbai, India:** "The greatest tragedy is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer."
2. What are some reasons for unoffered prayer?
3. **First: Pride**
 - a. One obvious form of pride is the religious (Christian!) pride that theoretically acknowledges God, Jesus and the Bible, but practically lives like life depended fully on what self can do.
 - b. Such people seldom, if ever, pray. Though they attend church, they are self-made, and don't really 'think' they need God! They are self-deceived and in danger of missing heaven along the way.
 - c. A second form of pride is uncovered when people become angry at God because He delays in answering, or because He answers differently than they ask, or because something tragic happened to them.
 - d. In their hearts they 'fold their arms' in defiance, or with a pout. They won't talk to God!
 - e. Or they may not express such haughtiness, but they are deeply disappointed and silently give up praying.
 - f. We can marvel at Job's response after hearing that everything he owned had been taken or destroyed, and ALL seven of his children killed.
 - g. **Job 1:20-22 (NIV)** *At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship²¹ and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."*²² *In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.*
 - h. And when he lost his health as well, his wife taunted him saying, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"
 - i. See how Job responded to this ...
 - j. **Job 2:10 (NIV)** *He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.*
 - k. May that be a rebuke to our own foolish pride!
4. **Second: Laziness or distractions**
 - a. This usually comes from having too many comforts.
 - b. Many of us don't have any real physical or 'this-world' needs, so we become distracted by the things of this world – these are worldly so-called 'Christians.'
 - c. Or we are undisciplined, and do not rise to greet the risen Lord in the mornings or stay up to spend time with Him in the evening.
 - d. Jesus' words to His disciples in the Garden come back to haunt us:
 - e. **Matthew 26:40 (NIV)** *"Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?"*
5. **Third: Unbelief**
 - a. Some simply do not believe God when He says that when we pray, we will receive.
 - b. And so, they don't ask.
 - c. But James says: *"You do not have because you do not ask God"* (James 4:2).

Reflecting and Reviewing

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What are three reasons given for why we do not pray?
3. What are a couple forms of pride, both that stop us from praying?

Life Application

1. Examine your life using the three reasons why we don't pray from today's reading. Be honest with yourself. Do any of these exist?

2. We live in a very busy society. Can you imagine standing before Jesus one day, and realizing that you missed building His kingdom because of distractions? Jonah 2:8 (NIV) says, “those who cling to worthless idols, forfeit the grace that could be theirs.” Ask the Holy Spirit if any of these things are idols in your life – sports or a specific team, television and/or movies, video games, social media, reading simply to escape, a specific hobby. Of course, a hungry heart will confess and turn from any idols.

Day 6

Obedience

1. For this final day, we want to focus on OBEDIENCE, as we as disciples are to be doers of the Word (James 1:22-25). The Bible clearly teaches that obedience is a clear echo of our love for God (1 John 5:3).
2. It is also through obedience that we find blessing and our lives are built on a rock (Matthew 7:24-27).
3. Take this lesson and quickly scan the title and headings – do not re-read the entire lesson.
4. Humbly go before God and ask – “what is one step of obedience that I can take as a result of this lesson?”
5. Perhaps have a section in your journal where you record this step (and steps from future lessons). Or put it in the calendar on your phone. This shows God that we are both intending and committing to obey.
6. Write or speak out a prayer of commitment based on the step.