

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE FAITH
LESSON 8
PRAYER AND THE BELIEVER
Supplemental Class Notes

Lesson Objectives

1. To explain the purposes of prayer to exhort us to spend time in prayer.
2. To practically teach us how to pray.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although nothing benefits a believer more than prayer, the purpose in praying must first of all be for the sake of God, not self. Prayer is, above all, an opportunity for God to manifest His goodness and glory. - John MacArthur

2. THE NATURE OF PRAYER (section I)

Start by discussing the introductory paragraph at the beginning of the lesson. Focus on the unique role that prayer plays in developing intimacy with God. Explain how prayer tunes our soul to be receptive to His will through His Word. Also discuss the purpose of prayer and that prayer is not an option.

A. The purpose of prayer

- ◆ Prayer brings glory to God-John 14:13
- ◆ Prayer aligns our will with God's will-Luke 22:42; Matthew 6:10

When we pray "Thy will be done;" we are praying first of all that God's will become our will. Second, we are praying that His will prevail all over the "earth as it (does) in heaven." - John MacArthur

- ◆ Prayer brings peace- Philippians 4:6-7
- ◆ We pray to confess sin- 1 John 1:9
- ◆ We pray to cast our burdens upon God- 1 Peter 5:6- 7 (section I, B)
- ◆ Prayer is powerful- James 5: 16- 18 (end of section I, C)

Question: Why pray if God is sovereign and all things have been decreed by Him?

B. Prayer is not an option.

- Jesus prayed; He is our example- Matthew 14:23; Luke 5:16; 6:12
- We are commanded to pray at all times- 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18 (section II, A)

To pray at all times is to live in continual God consciousness, where everything we see and experience becomes a kind of prayer, lived in deep awareness of and surrender to our heavenly Father. John MacArthur

3. THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER (section II)

In this section you will cover both conditions for answered prayer and then practically how to pray.

We will see that one needs to pray consistent with the will of God, which includes the confession of sin.

A. Conditions for answered prayer

There are conditions if one's prayers are to be answered.

First, one must abide in Christ and pray according to His will.

Second, one must not be harboring sin; one must have confessed all sin and turned from it (1 Jn 1:9).

1. You must abide in Christ and His words must abide in you - John 15:7 (section II, B, 2)

◆ Those who abide in Christ are those who confess Christ as Lord-1 John 4:15

◆ Being obedient and committed to the Word of God-1 John 3:22

Note: God is under no obligation to answer the prayers of the unsaved.

2. You must pray according to the will of God - 1 John 5:14 (section II, B, 3)

◆ Pray for that which is consistent with the will of God as revealed in the Bible.

◆ Pray asking in His name, consistent with who He is- John 14:13- 14

◆ Pray for that which brings God glory- John 14:13

◆ Pray to align your will with God's will- Matthew 6:10

To pray in Jesus' name is to pray consistent with who He is, with the goal of bringing Him glory.

It is to follow the pattern of His model prayer.

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10),

and His example of humble submission to the Father's will when He prayed in Gethsemane,

"Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

The goal of prayer is not to gratify our selfish desires (cf. James 4:3),

but to align our wills with God's purposes. - John MacArthur

3. Hindrances to answered prayer (section II, C)

◆ Sin - Psalm 66:18

◆ Wrong motives - James 4:3

◆ Lack of faith - James 1:5-8

B. How to Pray

1. General guidelines of prayer

◆ Pray to the Father; through Christ; in the power of the Spirit- Matt 6:9; Rom 1:8; Eph 2:17-18

- ◆ If you do not know what to pray for, ask the Holy Spirit to intercede- Romans 8:26 (section I, A, 2)
- ◆ Prayer needs to be intimate communion with God- Matthew 6:6
- ◆ Do not use meaningless repetition-Matthew 6:7-8
- ◆ Do not be hasty; let your words be few- Ecclesiastes 5:2 (section I, B, 4)

2. Jesus Christ's pattern for prayer (end of section II, B)

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, that is exactly what Jesus did.

He gave them the *disciples' prayer*, sometimes referred to as the *Lord's Prayer*.

Note: The disciples' prayer was not meant to be memorized to be prayed; but to be memorized as a framework for our prayers. This is clear from the outset, when Christ states in Matthew 6:9a, "Pray, then, in this way ... "

Jesus' Pattern for Prayer: Matthew 6:9–13	
Pray to God.....	Our Father who is in heaven
Exalt Him, saying.....	Hallowed be Your name
Submit to Him, praying.....	Your kingdom come, Your will be done
Look to Him, seeking.....	Our daily bread (sustenance)
Confess to Him, pleading.....	Forgive us our debts (sins)
Depend on Him, asking.....	Do not lead us into temptation
Trust in Him, requesting.....	Deliver us from evil

Note key points such as:

◆ **Our Father** - Why is the word "our" important? What can we learn from the word "Father"?

◆ **Hallowed be Your name** - What does "hallowed" mean?

What other attributes can you think of to praise God for? Recount God's attributes at the start of your prayers, it will set the stage for the rest of your prayer. Recall God's attributes from lesson #3.

◆ **Your kingdom come** - Pray for God's kingdom to come. Pray in anticipation and hope of the second coming of Christ when He will reign in glory. Pray for the salvation of souls who will inhabit the kingdom.

◆ **Your will be done** - Who's will? Pray that your will aligns with His will. Pray for those things that are consistent with God's revealed will.

◆ **Give us this day our daily bread** - This is a petition for one's needs or necessities. Recognize that God is your provider. Remember He cares for you and wants to supply your needs.

◆ **Forgive us our debts** - What are debts? This is a prayer of confession. Confess your sins to God (1 John 1:9).

◆ **Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil** - This is having a heart desire not to sin. It is recognizing that we are weak and inadequate to deal with sin. It is one's desire to submit to God and resist the temptations of the devil (John 4:7).

◆ **For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever** - Note, these words are not found in the most reliable manuscripts. However, they do exalt our all-powerful God, ending the prayer on a note of praise.

3. ACTS Acrostic for Prayer

Four Important Areas of Prayer	
Adoration.....	Reflect on God Himself. Praise Him for His attributes, His majesty, and His gift of Christ.
Confession	Admit to God that you have sinned. Be honest and humble. Remember, He knows you and loves you.
Thanksgiving.....	Tell God how grateful you are for everything He has given you, even the unpleasant things. Your thankfulness will help you see His purposes.
Supplication	Make specific requests. Pray first for others and then for yourself.
Notice that the first letters of these four words form the word "ACTS." You can use this acronym as a guide to maintain balance as you pray.	

4. The struggle of prayer (section III)

Prayer can be hard work, and sometimes discouraging.

A. Prayer can be discouraging (section III, B)

Psalms 22:1- 28, one of David's prayers. Note the progression in David's prayer:

- ◆ verses 1-2 - David is discouraged and wonders why God does not answer.
- ◆ verses 3-6 - David recognizes God and remembers God's past faithfulness. As David considers God he is humbled.
- ◆ verses 7-18 - David pours out his burdens upon the Lord.
- ◆ verses 19-21 - David calls on God for help and asks for assistance.
- ◆ verses 22-24 - David is moved to praise God for he knows that God cares.
- ◆ verses 25-28 - David is lifted up.

We learn that when we are discouraged, we need to recognize God as our help; remembering how He has cared for us in the past. We need to cast our burdens upon Him.

This leads us to encouragement and praise.

B. Answers to prayer (section III, C)

1. Prayer and the sovereignty of God

Prayers are governed by God's sovereignty and His purposes.

- ◆ Sometimes prayers are answered immediately- Isaiah 65:42
- ◆ Sometimes answers are delayed-Luke 18:7
- ◆ But we are exhorted to be persistent- Luke 18:1 (section II, A, 1)
- ◆ Sometimes answers are different than what is asked for-2 Corinthians 12:7- 9 (section III, C, 1)

2. Claiming from God

This is a huge movement today; namely, claiming from God one's petitions.

- ◆ The *sovereignty of God* (just discussed)
- ◆ Praying *according to God's will*, or aligning our will with the will of God
- ◆ The ultimate purpose of prayer, which is to bring God glory

5. Application (section IV)