

Chapter 10

PRAYER 1

INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER

Introduction: In this lesson, we will be looking at what prayer is, the importance of prayer in our lives as Christians, how to pray, and how to develop a meaningful and practical prayer life.

- I. Some of the definitions of prayer are: supplication to God, entreaty, petition for, or to beg. To intercede is to make requests on behalf of others. To entreat means to ask earnestly, to implore, to beseech. Supplication is entreating and petitioning (an earnest entreaty).

In Genesis 4:26, "*Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.*" We see in this scripture an example of the **Law of First Mention**. Enosh means "*mortal*." Abel had been killed by his brother Cain and with that death the people knew death for the first time. They understood for the first time that they would not live forever and that they needed strength and help beyond what they had on their own. This began the practice of asking God for help, direction, provision, strength. When we realize how little we know and how little we can do on our own we begin to call on God or to pray. As we go through this study we will look at ways men have called on God, the reasons for calling on God, and the results. We will also look at our need, our response, and how prayer can and should help us.

- II. There is power in prayer. How do we know this? We can see examples of this in scripture and in the lives of people who pray and in our own lives as we pray (call on God).

**IF WE BELIEVE, NO PROOF IS NECESSARY;
IF WE DON'T BELIEVE, NO PROOF IS SUFFICIENT.**

- A. The primary goal of prayer should not be just to get what we want. Neither should it be just wishing for things to be better. The primary emphasis, purpose, and goal in prayer should be communion and conversation with God. "*...growing in the knowledge of God,*" (*Colossians 1:10*). If we want to have a real and living relationship with God, we need to be able to talk with Him about what is going on in our lives on a daily basis.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (Philippians 3:10)

- B. Prayer can and will change things around us including ourselves.
1. Praying for the world (the world we personally live in) and the bigger world will affect how we see and care for people (Evangelism). "*Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.*" (*Jeremiah 29:7*) (*Matthew 28:19; Proverbs 21:1; Matthew 9:37-38*)

Foundation for Christian Service – Term 1 – Chapter 10 – Prayer 1

2. Praying for the church will bring unity; a coming together to see the purposes of God fulfilled. (Acts 4:31-32)
3. As we pray sincerely individually we will see spiritual growth because we will more and more recognize our dependence on God. If we rely on ourselves and others first, we cannot really know God. (Jude verse 20; Ephesians 6:18)

III. The following are some things we can understand about prayer.

- A. Prayer is entreating (asking for earnestly) God for spiritual power (**calling to God**).
 1. In the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal we see Elijah entreating God about a specific need and then making a specific request for God's power to be exercised and the result of that power exercised. (1 Kings 18:21-39)
 2. At a time of great need Jehoshaphat and the people entreated God with a specific request. God responded by saying, *"...do not be afraid or discouraged.....For the battle is not yours, but God's."* As a result they had peace and rest on every side. (2 Chronicles 20)
- B. Another aspect of prayer is transacting spiritual business (**commanding in God**). There is the law of spiritual authority that is as sure as the law of gravity. Jesus says that He has given us the "keys" of the kingdom. Keys always represent authority. Just as the father gave the Prodigal son authority to do business in his name when he gave him his ring, so Jesus has given us authority to do business in His name. (Matthew 18:18-19; Matthew 16:19)
- C. An important part of prayer can be tapping into spiritual secrets (**confiding with God**). In Psalm 25:12-14 God tells us that if we fear, respect Him for who He is, He will confide in us and make His covenant known to us. With this type of prayer we will learn the ways of God (wisdom), have peace and contentment, and know the blessings of God. (Refer to Genesis 18:17-33)
- D. One of the most important things we can do in prayer is to develop our spiritual love for God (**communing with God**).
 1. The word "know" or "Yada" in both the Hebrew and Greek as used in Daniel 11:32 and Philippians 3:10 indicates there is an intimacy, a feeling of closeness, a life giving intimacy.
 2. Just as intimacy in marriage creates a meaningful marital relationship, intimacy with God creates a meaningful spiritual relationship.
 3. Also as intimacy in marriage causes a woman to become pregnant; so intimacy with God can cause us to become pregnant with His life: ideas, ministry, direction. As in the natural pregnancy, the ideas, direction, ministry must be given time to grow and develop before they can be brought to birth.

Foundation for Christian Service – Term 1 – Chapter 10 – Prayer 1

- IV. We need to give prayer a place of priority in our lives and not just make it something we fall back on after everything else has failed. Prayer has great value in our lives as Christians. (2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 32:6, Psalm 34:15-17, Psalm 145:18; Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 11:6)
- A. Prayer will contribute to our spiritual growth.
 - B. Prayer will contribute to our spiritual strength.
 - C. Prayer will contribute to our spiritual consistency, faithfulness, and regularity.
- V. How do we learn to pray? *One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, **teach us to pray**, just as John taught his disciples."* (Luke 11:1)
- A. Why did the disciples feel they could ask Jesus to teach them how to pray?
 - 1. Because they saw Him praying, they felt they could ask Him to teach them how to pray.
 - 2. Because they saw His consistency in prayer, they knew it was important to Him.
 - 3. Because they saw the relationship He had with His Father, they knew it was important for them to have that relationship also. (John 8:16-19, 28)
 - B. Jesus' response to his disciples was not a complicated ritual prayer, but rather a simple guideline or example that they could follow. He had been cautioning them not to do acts of righteousness only to be seen by men. (Matthew 6:1)
- VI. Jesus began teaching His disciples how to pray by giving them some things not to do when praying. These are also things that we need to be aware of as we pray. (Matthew 6:5-8)
- A. We do not pray to draw attention to ourselves; it is a prayer to our Father.
 - B. We are not to pray just to make noise and to be heard.
 - C. We are not to pray complicated prayers.
 - D. We are not to pray like the pagans with many words (chanting).
 - E. But rather we are to come into our Father's presence by acknowledging Him by Name...Our Father, Redeemer, Savior, Protector, Lord, Provider. Remember we have the privilege to call Him Father because of the relationship we have with Him through adoption into His family. (Matthew 6:9-13)
- VII. Through the simple guideline that Jesus gave His disciples in what we now call the Lord's Prayer we can see five elements of effective praying.
- A. We first of all see the aspect and importance **worship or worthship**. Praise for who God is, thanksgiving for what God has done, and gratefulness for being part of God's family.

Foundation for Christian Service – Term 1 – Chapter 10 – Prayer 1

(Psalm 36:5-7, Psalm 106:1-5; 1 Chronicles 16:12-25, 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; 2 Chronicles 6:14-15; Acts 4:23-30; Ephesians 3:14-23)

- B. Our **confession of sin** to God is important because with the confession of sin there is the opening of a clear line to God. Guilt is always a hindrance in open communication in a relationship. When we confess our sins there is nothing to stand in the way of our relationship with Him. Guilt is released and the burden of the guilt of the sin is lifted. (Psalm-13, Psalm 32:1-8, Psalm 51, Psalm 66:18-19; 1 John 1:8-10)
- C. God graciously makes provision for us to also **petition Him for our needs**. As we petition God for our needs we need to be careful that we are asking in accordance with His Word and Will for our lives and in His purpose for the world. This will keep us from becoming selfish in our prayers. James tells us in James 4:3 that many times we ask with wrong motives to satisfy our own pleasures. (Philippians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:3; 1 John 5:14-15)
- D. We also need to **intercede for the needs of others**. In order to do this effectively, we need to develop a people and world awareness. We should stay up-to-date with world events and pray for God's intervention and help in situations and lives. Jesus gave us an example in John 17 of a prayer to pray for our family and friends. We can pray for protection for them in His name (v. 11); we can pray for God not to take them out of the world but protect them from the evil one in the world. (v. 15); and that they will be sanctified (set apart for God and His purposes) by the Word (v. 17). We can also pray for unity so that the world may believe (v. 23). (2 Chronicles 7:14; Matthew 9:38; Ephesians 1:15-23; Colossians 4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5)
- E. Since our primary goal or desire is to know God and His ways we need to make a **commitment of ourselves to God and His will in this world**. Not our will to be done but God's will and purpose to be done. (Luke 22:42; 2 Timothy 1:1)

VIII. A meaningful and practical prayer life is consistent and systematic. It should also have a sensitive balance as we see in the example Jesus gave us in the Lord's Prayer. Our prayers should be sincere and serious. We need also to pray compassionate prayers; to pray with the heart of a servant. (Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18; Matthew 6:9-13; James 5:16; Hebrews 5:7; Acts 10:1-4)

In order to develop a practical prayer life we must:

- ❖ Stop dreaming (Ecclesiastes 5:7)
- ❖ Start doing (Exodus 14:15-16; 1 Chronicles 22:16b)
- ❖ Stay determined (2 Corinthians 8:11)

IX. The scriptures give us many examples about places of prayer and times of prayer. The important thing is the place of intimacy, a place to be alone with God, a place of quiet. The place and the time is up to us. We need to find what will work best for us. If it does not work, we will not do it. (Matthew 6:6; Genesis 19:27; Genesis 24:63; Daniel 6:10; Habakkuk 2:1; Mark 1:35; Psalm 5:3; Psalm 55:17; Mark 6:46-47; Luke 6:12)

X. Here are some thoughts and ideas of how we can pray with order and consistency. These are

only suggestions. The important thing is for each of us to find what works effectively for us so that we will do it.

- A. **A prayer list and journal** may help us to get organized and to give order to our prayer lives. It is important though that we do not allow a prayer list to make our times of prayer just routine and lose its effectiveness. It is helpful to make notation of the answers that God gives and even the dates. These can be reminders to us of faithfulness of God to hear and answer our prayers. Some items we might have on a prayer list could be:
1. For our family; perhaps listed by name with current needs in their lives, desires you or they have, change and growth you would like to see. This needs to be kept current and to change as their situations change.
 2. For the church of which we are a member. Prayer for the pastor and family, for the leaders, for needs (financial, facilities, programs, etc.). It will be important to keep current on the needs, vision, etc.
 3. For our friends and their specific needs and desires.
 4. For the unsaved; generally and those that we know personally that need the Lord.
 5. For missions and missionaries. It is good to have some personal contact with missions and missionaries and pray specifically. Or use a book like "Operation World" that will help you to pray for the nations of the world and their needs.
 6. For world situations and for our government. To pray effectively here it will be important to keep current with the news and what is happening in the government and in the world.
 7. For our own selves as God deals with us through our personal Bible reading, through messages we hear, books we read.
 - ❖ Personal growth
 - ❖ Needs, provision
 - ❖ Health
 - ❖ Desires
- B. Use **printed prayer lists and calendars** that many churches and prayer groups publish. These can sometimes help to bring focus to our prayers.
- C. Some of us may find it helpful to **write letters to God or to write out our prayers**. Especially at times that praying seems difficult, writing out the prayers may help us to find focus.
- D. **God will sometimes give us prayer burdens**. This may be for only a certain season or time. There may be things that are a special burden to you that you feel a need to have a long-term involvement with in prayer. God will also from time to time give us "prayer assignments" where He will ask us to pray for someone or something until we see results.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 10 Prayer 1 - Introduction to Prayer

1. If the primary goal of prayer is developing a relationship with God, how do you see prayer helping in the building and growing of that relationship?
2. In order for our prayers not be too “me and mine” centered, can we find the Lord’s Prayer a helpful guide? What are some specific ways it will help us enlarge our praying?