



Study
1

OUTLINE

- What is prayer?
- Singing-Reading-Writing-Reciting-Spontaneous praying
- What praying does for God
- How our prayers glorify God

WHAT IS PRAYER?

In its simplest sense, prayer is talking to God. But pondering prayer a little deeper, prayer is actually conversing with God. As we study what the Scriptures teach about prayer, we will see that prayer is not just *speaking* but *listening*.

1. Genesis 20:7 is the first time that prayer is mentioned in Scripture. What do we learn from this text? What do you find curious about what God said in this text? (Note Genesis 20:17) _____

2. What did Isaac know in order for him to do what he did as recorded in Genesis 25:21?

Praying Privately

From the earliest times it appears that people had the idea that they could seek God in prayer to meet their needs. Scripture reveals that this was done simply and privately. As people learned more about God and how to approach Him, prayer evolved from merely a private matter to become, ultimately, a corporate (many people together) exercise in the New Testament.

3. Do you know what you would like God to do for you? That is, what are you praying for regularly? Can you share one of those requests with the group?

4. Read the episode of someone praying in First Samuel 1:9-18. What is perhaps unusual about this woman's prayer?

Private prayer should be an act of worship- something we do to further our surrender to God. It is also the most appropriate means to bring our deepest requests before God. But what it isn't, is an opportunity to be seen by others in order to impress them with your spirituality (note Matt. 6:6). Praying privately is not for super-Christians, it's for *all* Christians. Will you take time to pray privately?

5. Observe what Jesus was doing in Luke 6:12. Why did He do this?

When we pray privately, there is no right way to pray. That is, there are no magic words to utter, no mystical phrases that must be cited, or no sacred expressions to be repeated.

SINGING-READING-WRITING- RECITING-SPONTANEOUS PRAYING”

Perhaps the most common type of private praying is the whispered, or unspoken, or mental prayer. Prayers do not have to be spoken.

6. Consider the Book of Psalms. Randomly select a Psalm. Discuss whether this Psalm is a “private” prayer and whether it was meant to be prayed by the reader. Give reasons. _____

The Book of Psalms is generally considered to be a collection of prayers to be *sung*. Singing prayers is a legitimate way to pray. Singing prayers engages the pray-er’s heart and mind. It also helps the pray-er to recall God’s faithfulness and presence at those times when praying is difficult. The next time you find it hard to pray and you’re alone, try *singing* your prayers.

I was speaking with someone recently who told me that they weren’t particularly emotional. As such, they found it easier to pray by reading the prepared prayers of others. In particular they found the Anglican Common Book of Prayer very helpful for their prayer life. The next time your heart is dull toward prayer, try reading some classic prayers. The Book of Common Prayer might be a good place to start.

Another great way to pray is by *writing*. Some refer to this type of prayer as “Prayer-Journaling”. Christian Bookstores sell blank Prayer-Journals but your local stationery store sells blank exercise books which can serve the same purpose (for a fraction of the cost of a commercial Prayer-Journal). The next time you find it difficult to speak your prayers, try writing a daily prayer down in a Prayer-Journal.

Praying Privately

7. Some people regard reading the prayers of others as an insincere way for them to pray. What do you think?

Writing your prayers down also has the added benefit of having a *record* to which you can refer back to when your prayer is answered.

8. Some scholars regard Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians as a written prayer. Can you see why they might think that? Could you give one example of what Paul prayed for the Ephesians?

Some believers have found great comfort and strength from reciting prayers. Repeating prayers is however seen by some as pointless because God doesn't forget what we pray so why keep praying the same thing?

9. Read Matthew 26:40-44. What do we learn about praying from the Master of Prayer in this passage?

Some of the prayers of famous past Christians have been recited by other Christians down through the centuries. Do you know of any of these type of prayers? As a young boy I grew up in a family where at meal time we prayed the same prayer each time-

Thank You Lord for the world so sweet

Thank You Lord for the food we eat

Thank You Lord for the birds that sing

Thank You Lord for everything.

Praying Privately

While there is great benefit to be gained from praying prepared prayers, there is the need for each of us to develop spontaneous prayers.

10. Consider the prayer of Nehemiah 1:4-11. Do you think this prayer was spontaneous? Did Nehemiah intend for this to be a private prayer?

11. How is this prayer of Nehemiah (1:4-11) different to his prayer in Nehemiah 2:4?

When praying privately you have the wonderful privilege of being able to pray unscripted, spontaneous prayers. You can pray at any time, from your heart, using words that you might not otherwise use in public because they are too personal. Spontaneous prayers don't have to be long. These spontaneous prayers might be just two words! (Like, "God, help!")

WHAT PRAYING DOES FOR GOD

12. What does First Peter 3:12 tell us about God's response to His people praying?

Several times in Scripture God is described as being enveloped in clouds of glory. One contribution of the source of these 'glory clouds' is stated in Revelation 5:8.

13. Read Revelation 5:8 and discuss what this source of glory is.

Praying Privately

14. How does Mark 11:24 encourage us in prayer? (Note: Matt. 21:22)

When we pray and God answers, God is glorified! Far from being a selfish thing to present our petitions to God, it is ultimately a God-glorifying act to pray. If God chooses to grant our request it also brings glory to Him. Therefore, we should be pray-ers who live to give God glory and especially pray that He will be glorified in our lives.

15. In what way does praying affect our eternal condition-

By praying for our bills to be paid we are paying for our eternal debts to be cleared.

If we pray for God to change our character and to help us to become like Christ.

If we pray for others to be blessed God will surely bless us for eternity.

By praying for souls to be saved we will be given bigger mansions in heaven.

16. According to Romans 12:12 how much time should a growing believer be devoting to prayer everyday?

Your homework for our next Bible study meeting is to do the following-

1. Pray daily for the needs of those in your Bible Study Group (you'll need to note what those needs are)
2. Write a "Life Prayer" for yourself that you can share with the group.
3. Find a classic prayer that you can relate to and share it with the group (see if you can also get the story behind the prayer as well)

Amen.



PRAYER THAT WORKS

PRAYING FOR OTHERS

Study 2

OUTLINE

- Follow through on the homework from the last study
- The privilege and responsibility of prayer
- What affect our prayer has on others
- About Intercession
- Why prayer is necessary for people to be saved

THE PRIVILEGE & RESPONSIBILITY OF PRAYER?

“Why pray?” asked the talk back caller to the Christian radio program, “After all, God has ordained everything anyway.” The host of the radio program gave a concise yet accurate answer- “We should pray because God commands us to do so.” He’s right, of course, and in this way, prayer is a responsibility. Yet prayer is not *just* an act of obedience. God invites us to pray. He invites us to influence the course of world history and the condition of individual human hearts through prayer.

1. How do know that the Prophet Samuel regarded prayer as a responsibility based on First Samuel 12:23?

Notice how Hebrews 4:16 tells us to approach God in prayer.

Praying For Others

2. Should we regard First Timothy 2:8 as a command (for all believers)?

3. Is Second Corinthians 1:11 portraying prayer as a responsibility (command) or a privilege?

There is a great mystery about prayer. The mystery might be considered as - *God ordains everything.*

Scripture seems to present God's ordained plan as being outworked and furthered by the prayers of His people.

4. How does Colossians 4:3 show us that it is probable that Paul thought this way about prayer?

Why would the Apostle Paul make the request found in First Thessalonians 5:25 unless he believed that it would make a difference?

Many believers have come to realize that praying for others, even in the midst of their own challenges, has fostered spiritual maturity in them - that is, *they* are the beneficiāries.

WHAT AFFECT OUR PRAYER HAS ON OTHERS"

If our prayers had no affect on others then it's reasonable to think that Jesus would never had instructed His followers to do so, or even modeled its practice. Some people believe that God can not change a person's heart - a person must be willing to change before they can be changed.

Praying For Others

5. Note who Jesus said His followers should pray for?

Matthew 5:44

Luke 6:28

6. Note who Jesus prayed for in these references-

Luke 22:32

John 17:9

Jesus seemed to think that prayer could spiritually strengthen people, convict people, restore people, and bless people. Praying for others can at least achieve these things. The Apostle Paul thought that when people prayed for him doors of effective opportunity could open for him to preach the Gospel. He also thought that when people prayed for him, it could encourage and strengthen him. By the way he prayed for the Ephesian church it is apparent that he believed that praying for believers could result in them receiving deeper insight into God and His Word (refer to Eph. 1:18).

7. Discuss answers to prayer for yourself or others that you are aware of.

8. The early Church faced a huge problem in Acts 12. What was it? How did they react to this problem? What was the result?

Note the type of praying recommended in James 5:16.

ABOUT INTERCESSION

To *intercede* is to *intervene*. In a prayerful sense, to *intercede* is simply to pray for others *intently*. When fellowshiping with your Bible Study group, listen closely for what needs others in your group have which you can intercede for this week.

9. Consider First Timothy 2:1. What is being commanded? What is the goal of this command (read the context of this verse). _____

The Holy Spirit is an intercessor (Romans 8:26-27) and so is Christ (Isaiah 53:12; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). What greater modeling of effective prayer can the believer have?

Interceding involves constant prayer on behalf of another. It is more deliberate, persistent and focused than ordinary prayer. Some people feel particularly called to commit their lives to the ministry of intercession. Only eternity will finally reveal what a vital role they might have played in shaping events, individuals and nations.

10. Sometimes there is a physical sensation when the Holy Spirit uses us to intercede for others. What does Romans 8:26 seem to suggest might accompany Spirit-led intercession for others?

11. What did the prophet say that God would wonder about as recorded in Isaiah 59:16?

Who can you pray for more intently? Who can you pray for regularly? Down through the centuries, great Christian pray-ers have often kept Prayer-Lists with the names of people they are praying for. Do you have such a prayer-list?

Praying For Others

11. What type of praying does First Thessalonians 5:17 call for?

We should intercede for the lost to come to know Christ. There will be times also when we should intercede for our Church. If you are ever uncertain which one to do, do both!

WHY PRAYER IS NEEDED FOR PEOPLE TO BE SAVED

We pray for people to be saved. But why? If, as some people believe, not even God can change a heart, what is the point to praying to God to change someone's heart so they seek salvation in Christ?

12. In Jeremiah 24:7 God foretells that His people will one turn to Him with a new heart. We suspect that this is a prophecy about the coming New Covenant. But why does God have confidence that this happen?

Jeremiah's younger contemporary, Ezekiel, also prophesied about the coming New Covenant. In Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26 he announces that God will do something extraordinary. If we realize that God can actually do this, it should affect both our confidence and approach in prayer.

13. Discuss what Paul is actually requesting in Colossians 4:3 and Second Thessalonians 3:1-

14. What does Acts 14:27 teach us about what God can do in a person's heart?

Praying For Others

Someone has used military terms to describe the relationship between prayer and evangelism. He said that prayer is like “air cover” while preaching is like “ground cover”. One without the other makes the other *less* effective (note Acts 6:4).

15. Perhaps we should pray what Paul prayed for Philemon in Philemon 6? What difference do you think this type of praying might make for our church?

16. Ponder Romans 10:1. Paul believes something about what prayer can achieve. Read on Romans 10 and discuss what Paul goes on to say is necessary for this Romans 10:1 prayer to be answered.

We can pray -

- *For God to open people’s hearts toward the Gospel.*
- *That God reveals to a person their true spiritual condition.*
- *For a person to hear the Gospel (Romans 10:9-17).*
- *For a believer to be an effective and fruitful witness (Philemon 6).*
- *That a person may be given the gift of faith and the gift of repentance (Acts 11:18).*
- *For God to confirm His Word with signs and wonders (Hebrew 2:4). For preachers to be clear, bold and compassionate in their preaching of the Gospel.*

Your homework for our next Bible study meeting is to do the following-

1. Continue to pray daily for the needs of those in your Bible Study Group (you’ll need to note what those needs are)
2. Write a “Prayer List” of people you know who do not yet know Christ and pray regularly this week for these people.
3. Pray for those in your Bible study group to be more effective in their evangelism.

Amen.



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