



Brown Community Group Discussion Guide

“Prayer” Series Lesson 1 – January 31, 2016

Why Does God Want You to Pray?

I. **Series Starter:**

This series will comprehensively consider the Doctrine of Prayer. What is prayer? Why does God want us to pray in the first place? What does God say about Prayer? Can prayer change God’s mind or the way He acts? Who are we really supposed to pray too? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in praying? How are we supposed to “Pray According to God’s Will”? How are Christians supposed to handle waiting on God’s answer or supposedly unanswered prayers?

We will break the series into multiple lessons/subject matter:

1. Why Does God want us to Pray?
2. The Effectiveness of Prayer
 - a. Does Prayer Change the Way God Acts?
 - b. Effective Prayer made possible through Jesus
 - c. Who are we supposed to pray too?
 - d. Role of Holy Spirit
3. Important Considerations for Effective Prayer
 - a. Pray “According to God’s Will”
 - b. Praying with Faith and Obedience
 - c. Forgiveness and Humility
 - d. Praying Continually and Earnestly
 - e. Waiting on the Lord, What about Unanswered Prayer?
4. Praise and Thanksgiving

Study material is primarily taken from Systematic Theology by Wayne Gruden, Chapter 18; The Broadman Bible Commentary by the Southern Baptist Convention and Unger’s Bible Dictionary.

II. **Definition of Prayer:**

Prayer is personal communication or conversation with God, not in contemplation or meditation, but in direct address to him. A solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God or an object of worship.

- It is a “beseeching the Lord” (Ex. 32:11); “pouring out the soul before the Lord” (1 Sam. 1:15); “praying and crying to heaven” (2 Chr. 32:20); “seeking unto God and making supplication” (Job 8:5); “drawing near to God” (Ps. 73:28); “bowing the knees” (Eph. 3:14).

1. entreat, implore, request, or plea in a humble manner
2. to address God with adoration, praise, confession, supplication, or thanksgiving
3. request for help or expression of thanks
4. spiritual communion
5. A reverent petition

III. **Scriptural Terms for Various Words used in Biblical Text:**

Hebrew terms each with a different word and meaning:

1. Supplication to God, Intercession; supplication for another
2. To judge, interpose as mediator, with the general sense of prayer

3. To contend before a judge, to plead a cause
4. Burn incense, before prayer with God
5. To strive to please, to entreat God's favor
6. Wisper and pray in a low voice

Greek terms each with a different word and meaning:

1. Prayer for a particular benefit
2. Prayer in general, not restricted to content
3. Confiding access to God; giving prominence to expression of personal need or devotion
4. Vow or dedication

IV. Scriptural History:

The principal means by which men, created in the image of God, have expressed their attitudes and supplications to God from the beginning of time. One of the earliest mentioned in the bible was Enoch in Genesis 4:26. It has also been an integral part of public worship of God. Typically expressed a person or groups feelings and dispositions of their hearts through praise, thanksgiving, prayer and intercession before God. Psalms is testimony to the earnest and fervent prayers of Israelites from early on in history.

An interesting note was concerning the **early posture** of prayer:

1. Typically standing (1 Sam 1:26; Dan 9:20; Matt 6:5)
2. As an expression of a deeper devotion, they would kneel (1 King 8:54; Ezra 9:5; Dan 6:10)
3. Heads bowed down to the ground (Neh 8:6)
4. Generally hands were uplifted towards the heavens (1 King 18:43; Neh 8:7; Psa 28:2)

V. Christian Doctrine:

The principal means by which men , created in the image of God, have expressed their attitudes and supplications

- Prayer is the expression of man's dependence on God for all things
- Means of sowing God's Grace that affords the privilege of close communication
- Deep sense of need, helplessness and unworthiness
- Assurance of God's divine fullness and love
- Prayer requisites are sincerity, repentance, contrition, purpose, spirit of consecration, faith and submission to the will of God
- Prayer develops a deeper sense of spiritual needs, clearer views of the fullness and freeness of grace

Prayer is the movement of our soul in its dependence and need, which then becomes God's way of blessings

VI. Why Does God wants Us to Pray?

1. Prayer is not made so that God can "find out" what we need. God wants us to pray because prayer expresses our trust in God and is a means whereby our trust can increase. The primary emphasis of prayer is that we pray with faith, which means a dependence of God.

Matthew 6:5-8

5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

God delights in his creatures expressing dependence on Him, showing the creator/creature relationship.

Things expressed through fervent prayer of a believer:

- Trust in God, not ourselves
- Dependence on God for all
- Recognizes our creator above all

Luke 11:9-12

9 “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; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 11 “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!”

2. God not only wants us to trust Him, but also to love him and have fellowship:
 - Prayer brings us into deeper fellowship with God; He loves us and delights in our deeper fellowship
 - Humble attitude
 - Convinced in God’s wisdom, love, goodness and power
 - Relating to God as a person
 - God places an extreme importance on prayers in our relationship with Him

Mark 11:22-24

22 “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. 23 “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours

3. God allows us as His creatures to be involved in activities that are eternally important:
 - Work of the kingdom is advanced
 - Gives expression as creatures made in God’s image

VII. Group Questions:

1. Why is your prayer life so important to your relationship to God?
2. Do we sometimes have trouble accepting the full meaning of Matthew 6:8 that God knows all before our prayers? Does this scripture impact the way you pray or approach your prayer?
3. How can we use Luke 11:13 to increase the power and expectancy of our prayers?
4. How are we to integrate God’s Will and plan with our ability through prayer to “change or alter Gods decisions?