

Praying As God Instructs Us To Pray

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Colossians 4:2 (NIV)

This, then, is how you should pray: ...

Matthew 6:9a (NIV)

It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." And He said to them,

"When you pray, say:

'Father, hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

'Give us each day our daily bread.

'And forgive us our sins,

For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation.' "

Luke 11:1-4 (NASB)

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16b (NIV)

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. Jeremiah 33:3 (KJV)

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, ... 1 Peter 3:12a (NIV)

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The Purpose of This Study

Bible reading and prayer are as important to our spiritual health as food and water are to our physical health. This study guide is designed to help Christian laymen to learn, to understand, and to put into practice what God teaches us in His Word about prayer. This is not written for scholars and theologians; it is written for ordinary laymen who want to know God and grow in their walk with Him. This study is not a book. It is simply a collection of Bible study guides on key Biblical teaching relating to prayer. I have not attempted to make it all flow smoothly with a lot of introductions, transitions, conclusions, or lengthy explanations. This study is written in simple to understand language. This is not written for scholars and theologians, but instead for ordinary laymen who want to understand what the Word teaches and to put it into practice.

It is my (Phil Benedict) intent to let Scripture speak for itself. The Word of God speaks clearly on the key issues of life. It is my conviction that the Word of God is far more powerful and effective than my own advice or counsel. For this reason, I have kept my own “commentary” to a minimum and have quoted many Scriptures that pertain to the subject being covered.

About Phil Benedict

I (Phil Benedict) grew up in a godly Christian home and was saved as a young child. I was active in our church youth group in Boise, Idaho, where I met my wife, Linda. We married when we were young and God has blessed our marriage. We have now been married for over fifty-four years (as of January 2021). We have four children, all of whom are actively serving the Lord. We both graduated from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois, and from Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. I have also taken classes in secondary school administration at the College of Idaho in Caldwell, Idaho, as well as classes in Cherokee heritage from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and classes in drug and alcohol counseling at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. We have served as “full time” Christian workers for over thirty-five years. We have been members of UIM International (United Indian Missions) for over twenty-five years.

Thanks to My Wife

God has given me an exceptional wife. She is a very talented person and she chose to be a stay-at-home mom and to be a ministry partner with me. She has been a huge blessing in my life. She has been my co-worker and partner throughout life. Without exaggerating, she has spent many hundreds of hours editing, checking for mistakes, making suggestions, printing, and binding this and other study guides that we have put together. Without her, these study guides would not exist.

My Prayer

“Father, I pray that Your name will be glorified and revered through this study of prayer. May those who go through this study grow in their understanding of prayer and may they put that understanding into practice. I am asking that Your Spirit work in their lives and in my own life, bringing us into a greater maturity in our walk with You. May Your people be faithful in prayer and may we all uplift and hallow Your name in all that we do and say. I thank and praise You for what You are doing through this study. You deserve honor, glory, and praise for who You are and for what You have done.”

Bible Translations Used in These Studies

There are five different translations used throughout these studies. The translations used are: the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the New International Version (NIV), and the English Standard Version (ESV).

The purpose of these studies is to help ordinary people understand fundamental Biblical truth. When quoting Scripture, I have tried to use the translation which most simply and clearly states the Biblical truth being covered. Although these study guides will not be published or sold, I have tried to adhere to copyright laws which limit the number of Scriptures that can be quoted from each translation. No particular translation has been favored in these study guides. After each verse that is quoted, the translation is identified by giving the initials of the translation.

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How to Get the Most from This Study Guide

The subject matter in this study deals with fundamental Biblical truths relating to prayer and it is not a light study. Take your time as you go through these studies. If you go over the material too quickly without much thought, it will have little or no lasting impact on your life.

It is important that one take the time to read, to digest, and to absorb the Scriptures in this study guide. Take time to carefully read and think about them. Meditate on them and the truths they teach. Regularly ask God for a right understanding of Scriptural truths and then make them part of you. Learn to love God and His Word. Commit yourself to making Biblical truths the foundation of your life and to putting them into practice every day of your life.

Preparing for This Study — Psalm 139:23-24 and John 15:1-10

To prepare your own heart as you go through this study of prayer, you may wish to carefully read and think about each of the following Scriptures -- Psalm 139:23-24 and John 15:1-10.

Psalm 139:23-24 is a prayer. As you seek to better understand and put into practice what God teaches about prayer, it would be good to regularly pray this prayer.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV)

“Search me, O God, and know my heart;” Sincerely praying this prayer indicates a willingness for God to examine every part of your heart and soul and all your being. This indicates a willingness to be open before God and to be filled and to be led by the Spirit of God.

“test me and know my anxious thoughts.” This goes a step further. It is a willingness and desire for God to test us. Testing brings growth and this part of the prayer is a prayer for growth in our walk with Him. Testing may not always be pleasant, but it is an important part of our being strengthened and growing in our faith. Being tested can cause us to have anxiety or anxious thoughts. As we are open before God and express our anxious thoughts to Him and learn to trust in Him, He can give us peace -- even in times of testing.

“See if there is any offensive way in me,” This indicates a desire for God to reveal any wrong or sinful way in our life. We are not denying or trying to hide our sin.

“and lead me in the way everlasting.” This indicates a desire to turn from any wrong or sinful way, and to be a genuine disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It would be good to read **John 15:1-10** several times and then spend some time thinking about it before beginning this study. This passage speaks directly to the issues of prayer and of being productive and fruitful in our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to absorb all of this passage, but following are two key verses:

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. John 15:5 (NKJV)

If we do not make the Word of God an ongoing part of our lives, we will be spiritually weak and ineffective. Notice the phrase, “*for without Me you can do nothing*”.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. John 15:7 (NKJV)

Abiding in the Word of God is a key to answered prayer. Going through this study of prayer will do little, if any, good if we are not regularly absorbing the Word of God.

Chapter One

Prayer and Genuine Long-lasting Spiritual Growth and Productivity

The fundamental reason we were created by God and the most fundamental reason we exist is to bring glory to God. The kind of person we are and everything we do should uplift, honor, and glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God, in His Word, the Bible, gives us three foundations for consistently living a life that glorifies Him. These foundations are:

1. To continually grow in our understanding of the Word of God and to put its teaching into practice
2. To pray as God instructs us to pray.
3. To meet together with fellow believers in a solid Biblical church, to be taught, to fellowship, to serve, to build up and to encourage each other.

No Christian will ever be stronger than his pattern of absorbing and applying sound Biblical truth, and no Christian will ever be stronger than his prayer life. These are measures of our walk with God. We can be a “good” person, regularly participate in all the meetings at church, teach Sunday School, and we can even be a well-known teacher or preacher, but if we are not regularly absorbing the Word of God and if we have not developed Biblical patterns of prayer, there will be little or no genuine spiritual growth and there will be little of the fruit of the Spirit in our life.

I remember leading a group therapy session in which there was a pastor who had become an alcoholic. I stressed this very thing – the importance of daily absorbing the Word of God. It was like a light bulb went off inside him. He, as a busy pastor of a Bible-believing church, had neglected his own walk with the Lord, and he paid a high price for that neglect.

God did not design us to be spiritual hermits. We need each other. We need to meet together to learn, to serve, to encourage and build up our fellow believers, and to be encouraged and built up ourselves. When we fail to consistently meet with fellow believers, we are setting ourselves up for many problems and for being unproductive in our walk with the Lord. Active involvement and serving in a sound Bible teaching church is a third foundation of living a productive life that glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ.

These three foundations all go together. Each is important. If we are lax in any of these, our walk with God will suffer. When each foundation is in place, each one will strengthen the others.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, ... Colossians 3:16a (ESV)

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet

together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)

None of us has reached perfection in any of these three areas of our walk with the Lord. However, we can regularly grow and become more mature in each area. Spiritual growth is pleasing to God and leads to productive and effective service to Him. Growth allows the Spirit of God to work in and through us and will result in abundant spiritual fruit.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-8 (NASB)

...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. 2 Peter 3:18 (NKJV)

This study guide focuses on prayer, the second of these three foundations. Its purpose is to help and encourage individuals to grow in their walk with the Lord by developing healthy Biblical patterns of prayer. However, as we seek to develop Biblical patterns of prayer, we must remember that we will not grow much if we are not also abiding in and absorbing the Word of God, and regularly meeting together with fellow believers.

Prayer and the Sovereignty of God

God is sovereign. He is in total control of all that happens or ever will happen. He knows the future as well as He knows the past. According to the Word of God, He has planned the future and He works out everything according to His own will and purpose.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, Ephesians 1:11 (ESV)

In God's own sovereignty and wisdom, He has determined that He will respond to the prayers of His people. We, as people, will never fully understand the mind of God or how God works. We will never fully understand how a sovereign God who has everything planned out and is in total control, responds to the prayers of His people.

However, one thing is very clear from the Word of God. God instructs us to pray and He promises positive answers to our prayers. (See Study Guide Five.) *God instructed us to continually pray and He has instructed us on how to pray. We must not take this awesome responsibility lightly. If we expect to see our sovereign God at work, we must pray. There are no shortcuts or alternatives.*

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (KJV)

Devote yourselves to prayer, Colossians 4:2a (NASB)

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, Luke 18:1 (NASB)

Prayer and Spiritual Productivity

God instructs us to pray. *To move the hand of God through prayer is a high calling. Again, we dare not take that calling lightly.*

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16b (NIV)

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. Jeremiah 33:3 (KJV)

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer,...
1 Peter 3:12a (NIV)

And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. Isaiah 65:24 (KJV)

You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,
Psalm 10:17 (NIV)

But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him. Psalm 4:3 (KJV)

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16 (KJV)

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, Ephesians 3:20 (NKJV)

You do not have because you do not ask. James 4:2b (NASB)

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)

...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)

If God's people do not pray, family members may not be as fully blessed. If we fail to pray, pastors, teachers, evangelists, missionaries, and other leaders may not see as much spiritual fruit in their ministries. Your fellow Christians may not be as fully blessed and you yourself will not be as fully blessed if you fail to pray.

If you sincerely desire to walk close to God and to live a spiritually productive life, then commit yourself to a lifetime of developing healthy Biblical patterns of prayer. It will not be easy. It is not

easy for individuals and it is not easy for churches. If it were easy, more would do it.

If you make a commitment to prayer, there will most likely be times when you will falter and there may be times when you will get discouraged. Don't lose heart. Get back on track. Absorb the Word. He knows that we are dust and He is delighted when we get back to our commitment to prayer.

...for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, Proverbs 24:16 (NIV)

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. Psalm 103:13-14 (NIV)

Like all aspects of our walk with God, developing good patterns of prayer is a growing experience. It takes time to learn and to develop good patterns of prayer. It is something we work on throughout our entire life. However, it is deeply satisfying to know that even as we are learning and growing, God still answers our prayers.

Churches and Prayer

Churches, as well as individual Christians, need to develop healthy patterns of prayer. *Churches who devote little time to prayer will always be weak churches.* It makes no difference whether that church is large or small. Churches may appear to be healthy; but if there is little prayer, it is, in reality, a castle being built by man, not by God.

I have personally taught in a number of churches, in northeast Oklahoma and elsewhere. From what I have observed, most of these churches spend less than five minutes a week in prayer together as a church. In most of these churches essentially all the prayer requests given are for physical health. Yet in the Word of God, out of well over 1000 references and teaching on prayer, very few of them relate to physical health. Praying for physical health is needed; however, it should not be the major focus of our prayers.

Many Christians often complain about today's sad state of the American church or Christianity in general, but only a few earnestly regularly pray for the church or for fellow believers. There are numerous Bible conferences that focus on topics such as prophecy or creation. There are conferences and seminars that teach methods, techniques, and strategies for starting and strengthening churches and families. However, there are few conferences or seminars that teach us to pray and there are few conferences or seminars where prayer is much more than a routine way to open or close a meeting. In many "prayer meetings", prayer is almost non-existent. There is certainly a connection between the scarcity of prayer for the spiritual health of fellow believers and the scarcity of spiritual power and fruit in many Christians and in Christian churches and in families.

Most churches and individuals simply have not been taught to pray. One of the greatest weaknesses and dangers facing the church in America is that few of our leaders seem to be given to consistent earnest Biblical prayer. Many are gifted speakers, many are excellent organizers, many are good promoters, many are good at developing strategies, many have written books, and many claim to be filled with the Spirit, but few seem to be given to consistent earnest Biblical prayer.

Both large and small churches can be God-blessed churches. In many small churches people feel like

they are second rate. There just doesn't seem to be much happening like there is in the "big" churches. That attitude will change if that small church will devote itself to prayer. A church that prays as God instructs us to pray will be a blessed productive church. Over time they will see God work in thrilling ways. This does not mean that a "small" church will grow to be a "big" church. Being big is not necessarily evidence that God is at work. God can use small churches and He can use big churches. Through prayer, God will work, whether the church is large or small.

Many churches and individuals desperately need to devote more time to prayer, and they desperately need to change what they pray for. Changes are not always easy, but this change is needed. I have suggested to some churches that meet on Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings, and Wednesday evenings that they might want to consider devoting the Sunday evening service entirely to prayer. Sunday morning and Wednesday evening could be given to the preaching and teaching of the Word, and Sunday evening given entirely to prayer.

A Blessed But Weak Generation of American Christians

This generation of Christians in America has many resources and advantages that could not have been imagined only a few years ago. It would seem that we should be spiritually stronger than any past generation of Christians.

We have Bibles in many different translations, paraphrases, and versions. Recently I was looking for Bibles in several different catalogues and there were Bibles for mothers, Bibles for fathers, and many Bibles for kids. There were Bibles for cowboys, for truck drivers, for soldiers, for nurses, for doctors, for athletes, for seekers, for "spirit-filled" Christians, for alcoholics, for peace officers, for teachers, for outreach, for outdoorsmen, for prisoners, for the homeless, for the terminally ill, for disaster relief, and for abstinence. There were even duct tape Bibles for campers. We have pew Bibles, study Bibles, illustrated Bibles, shirt pocket Bibles, thin line Bibles, large print Bibles, Bibles on tapes, Bibles on CD's, Bibles for the internet, illustrated Bibles, and dramatized Bibles.

In the United States today we have more Christian books than all previous generations combined. We have literally thousands of Christian books about the family. We have more Christian counselors than ever before. Yet the divorce rate among Christians has never been higher. We have many, many books on raising children; yet never have we seen so many of our youth abandoning the church. We have far more books available on strategies for ministries and church development than ever before. And there are more Christian musicians and concerts than at any time in history.

We have far better church facilities. We have more Bible colleges and seminaries. We have more trained leaders, gifted speakers and experts on various aspects of the Christian life. We have technology available to us for spreading the gospel message that past generations never even dreamed of. Christian radio and television programs saturate the airwaves.

This Christian generation has poured many millions of dollars into reforming society. In the courts and in Congress, we fight abortion, homosexuality, and many other issues. We regularly receive e-mails asking us to sign petitions and contact our congressmen about various issues.

Yet in spite of all this, few would claim that this generation of American Christians walks closer to the Lord than previous generations.

Why???

There could be many answers to this question of “why” and some will think this is an oversimplification, but I do not believe the question of “why?” is hard to figure out. *First, in spite of the amazing abundance of Bibles and other resources, in reality, we give little time or effort to absorbing and applying genuine Biblical truth, and second, we give even less time to regular passionate Biblical prayer. These are the real sources of power.*

Christians can loudly decry the lack of prayer in public schools and other public forums; yet most seldom bother to passionately pray at home or at church where we can pray without restriction.

The Biblical emphasis on prayer is clear and unmistakable. *If we ever expect to be anything more than a mediocre Christian or a mediocre church, we must put His word into practice and we must learn to pray as God taught us to pray.*

Chapter Two

How Jesus Prayed

A brief look at John 17 and other Scriptures

As Christians, we are followers or disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is God's plan and purpose that we, His followers, be conformed to the image of His Son.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:29 (NKJV)

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 1 Peter 2:21 (NASB)

Being conformed to His image exalts and glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was a man of prayer. In order for us to be like Him, we need to follow the example of prayer that He set for us.

The purpose of this chapter is to look at how Jesus prayed, so that we can follow in His steps.

1. *Jesus prayed often.*

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:16 (NIV)

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. Mark 1:35 (KJV)

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. Luke 6:12 (KJV)

Jesus, the very Son of God, prayed often. Since Jesus regularly prayed, it certainly should impress on us our own need to pray in the same way.

2. *Jesus prayed in accord with the will of God.*

Jesus knew before He went to the cross how much He would suffer, and He cried out to His Father for deliverance. *Yet, because it was the Father's will, He submitted and went to the cross.*

And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

Mark 14:35-36 (NASB)

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Matthew 26:39 (NKJV)

He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. Matthew 26:42 (KJV)

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. John 6:38 (NKJV)

As humans, we will never understand how deeply Jesus must have dreaded going to the cross. He was absolutely pure and holy. There was never even the smallest tint of evil in His character. Yet, on the cross, Jesus underwent the horror and agony of becoming sin. *He paid the full price for all our sin so that we could become the righteousness of God.*

On the cross, when Jesus became sin, in a way that we will never understand, there was a separation between our holy God and His Son. In agony of soul Jesus cried out, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Mark 15:34 (ESV)

Psalms 22, a Messianic psalm, gives us greater insight into the thoughts and feelings of Christ while He was on the cross. Again, we as humans cannot begin to understand how deeply our Lord Jesus Christ suffered as He became sin and died in our place, paying the full price for all our sin.

As a result of Jesus' willingness to submit to the will of the Father, you and I can be forgiven of our sin and have eternal life with the Father and with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are blessed beyond understanding!

Since Jesus was willing to submit to the will of the Father and go to the cross for us, shouldn't we be willing to submit to the will of God and pray as He instructs us to pray?

3. Jesus prayed with passion.

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Hebrews 5:7 (NIV)

And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Luke 22:44 (ESV)

Jesus did many mighty works while He was here on earth. In all the accounts that record His miracles, there is no indication that Jesus had to work hard or to use a lot of energy as He performed these miracles. He was God. All He had to do was to say the word and it was done. Even when creating the universe, He simply spoke it into existence. *Yet, when Jesus prayed, He expended a tremendous amount of physical energy and deep emotional energy. He agonized in prayer before the Father.*

4. *Jesus prayed with reverence and submission.*

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Hebrews 5:7 (NIV)

Jesus, the Son of God, had a reverence for God, His father. We, too, must learn to have a reverence for God.

Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Matthew 6:9 (ESV)

5. *Jesus prayed for individual disciples.*

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Luke 22:31-32 (NASB)

6. *Jesus prayed for all of His disciples.*

I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. John 17:9 (NKJV)

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, ... John 17:20-21a (NIV)

We, too, are to pray for our fellow believers.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)

7. *Jesus prayed for children.*

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” And he laid his hands on them and went away. Matthew 19:13-15 (ESV)

Jesus had a special place in His heart for children. Children need to be taught Biblical truth. Their eternal destiny is at stake. Most of them are not taught this truth at home or at school. *Our prayers of intercession and our efforts to reach them may be the only hope some of them have.*

8. *Jesus is still interceding for us today.*

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ... John 17:20 (NIV)

Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25 (NASB)

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 1 John 2:1 (NIV)

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Romans 8:33-34 (NASB)

This is an amazing truth. Jesus is still praying and interceding for each of us today. What a motivation to be faithful and live a godly life.

A Brief Look at John 17

One of the most inspiring chapters in all of the Bible is John 17. This is a record of Jesus' prayer the evening before He was crucified. It gives us insight into the very heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are many Biblical references that tell us that Jesus prayed, but no other Biblical passage gives us such rich insight into *what* Jesus prayed. This prayer also gives us insight into the relationship between Jesus and His Father, and then how we as His children fit into that relationship.

Before going through this study, it would be wise to read the entire chapter two or three times and to take time to think and meditate on what you read. Ask the Spirit of God to give you a correct understanding and appreciation of what you read.

As you begin to absorb this chapter, you begin to get an understanding of the oneness and unity that exists between Jesus and the Father. We obviously do not know the Father like Jesus knew Him, but we are His children and His followers, and in this chapter, we begin to see *that we share in that unity and oneness between Jesus and His Father*. As we begin to understand the depth of our oneness with Jesus and the Father, it is bound to have a profound effect on our prayers.

This prayer is rich and deep. The brief comments made about the verses in each section are woefully inadequate and do not begin to plumb the depths of this prayer.

In the first eight verses of this chapter, we given a rare glimpse of the deep relationship between Jesus and His Father. Throughout the chapter we, who are His adopted children and who have been given eternal life, are central in this prayer.

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, John 17:1 (ESV)

The time of Jesus' death had come. The very next day Jesus would be crucified, making salvation

available to all people. In this verse Jesus prayed that the Father would glorify Him (Jesus) so that He could glorify the Father. Even though Jesus and the Father were one, Jesus still sought to glorify the Father. What an example He sets for us. We too must seek to glorify God. In the Word of God, we are instructed to glorify God, and we also seek to glorify Him because of the example set by Jesus.

Jesus did not look forward to the agony of the cross; yet, as He prayed, He looked beyond the cross to the glory that would come when He returned to His place in heaven with the Father. This is a good pattern for us to follow. Like Jesus, we must look beyond our short-term trials here on earth to the

blessings and the glory that will be ours for eternity. Looking forward to heaven can make the trials on earth much easier to bear.

For you (God) granted him (Jesus) authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:2-3 (NIV)

In the plan of God, Jesus died on the cross for our sin and He is the Savior and Redeemer of all who believe in Him. God gave Jesus authority over all people, and with that authority Jesus gives eternal life to all who believe on Him.

To know the only true God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only way to have eternal life. It does not say that to have eternal life we must know about Him, or have an academic understanding of Him, but rather we must *know* the Father and His Son. In the context of this chapter, to *know* them is to have a oneness and unity with them. This is an amazing truth. You and I who were sinful to the core can be one with our holy God and spend an eternity giving Him our worship and our service.

After Jesus finished the work for which He came to earth to do and before He returned to the Father in heaven, He commissioned us to make disciples of Him in all nations.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

Today Jesus gives us the responsibility of discipling those the Father gives Him. A disciple is a dedicated follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to make disciples in every nation on earth. This is an awesome responsibility. Yet Jesus, who has the authority to send us, promises to always be with us. We are not alone when we carry out His commission. He is always with us. What a joy and what a blessing!!!

I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. John 17:4-5 (ESV)

In all His actions here on earth, Jesus glorified the Father. As Jesus completes the work that God sent Him to do, He is anxious to return to the presence of His Father and to share in the Father's glory.

In these opening verses of this chapter, we begin to get a glimpse of the relationship between Jesus and

the Father. Though Jesus was one with the Father, He obeyed the father; He glorified the Father; and He longed to return to His Father's presence. God glorifies the Son and gave Him authority to give eternal life to all those whom the Father gives to Jesus.

We also can look forward to being in the presence of God. For eternity we will be with Him and be one with Him. We also glorify the Father and, according to John 17:20-23, we too receive glory from Him. What an amazing standing with God and what a future we have!!!

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. John 17:6-8 (ESV)

When Jesus was on earth, He demonstrated His submission to the Father and oneness in purpose with the Father. The Father gave us, who believed in Him, to the Son and the Son teaches us the words of the Father. The disciples knew with certainty that Jesus was from the Father. All that Jesus said and all that He did, did were from the Father. What an example for us to follow! All that we say and all that we do should not come from ourselves but from God.

I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, ... John 17:9-10a (ESV)

Now Jesus begins to specifically pray for those believers given to Him by the Father. In this verse it clearly states that we belong to both the Father and the Son. It would be a huge blessing to belong to the Father *or* the Son, but in reality, we belong to *both* the Father and the Son. We, as the children of God, are loved and cared for by both. While the Holy Spirit is not mentioned here, there is no doubt that we are loved and cared for by all three members of the trinity.

...and I am glorified in them. John 17:10b (ESV)

As believers, we glorify our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the most fundamental reason we exist -- to glorify God. Many of us look at ourselves and wonder how much we actually glorify God. We just don't feel like super saints that bring God a lot of glory. However, the twelve disciples were, in many ways, very ordinary people with their share of faults; yet, they were still loved and according to Jesus' prayer, they brought glory to Him. That would indicate that we too, though we are very ordinary people, bring glory to God. Again, what a truth! We, as saved sinners, bring glory to our holy God.

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name -- the name you gave me -- so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. John 17:11-12a (NIV)

Jesus knew that in a few days He would be returning to the Father but that His disciples would be left behind in the world. While Jesus was in the world, He protected His disciples. Now that Jesus was leaving them, He asked His Father to protect them with all the power of the name of God Himself.

Jesus prayed that, through the power of God, His followers would be one in the same way that Jesus

and the Father are one. Within the trinity there is deep divine love, unity, and harmony. There is perfect fellowship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They give and receive glory and honor. Jesus glorifies the Father and the Father glorifies the Son. The Spirit brings honor to the Son and Jesus submits to the will of the Father.

Jesus prayed that the same kind of love and harmony that exists within the trinity would also characterize His followers. When we are one, God is glorified and it brings joy to the heart of God.

When believers are splintered and fighting one another, it grieves the heart of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

John 17:12b (NIV)

Of all those believers that God gave to the Son, none have been lost. What a truth. We are secure. This was true of the disciples that followed Jesus while He was on earth and it is just as true of us who are His followers today.

The only “disciple” that was lost was Judas Iscariot, who was not a genuine believer. In fulfillment of prophecy, Judas rejected and betrayed our Lord and was doomed to destruction. All the rest of the twelve disciples were genuine followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and none of them were lost.

But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. John 17:13-16 (ESV)

It appears as if this prayer was spoken out loud in the presence of the disciples. Hearing this prayer must have brought joy to the heart of the disciples. Jesus was praying for them. He was praying for their protection. He wanted them to have joy. Soon they would face persecution and the hatred of the world, just as He (Jesus) was facing the hatred and rejection of the world. When the disciples did experience rejection, persecution, and hatred by the world, they must have remembered that Jesus had prayed for them and had asked the Father to protect them. Remembering this prayer by Jesus would certainly bring encouragement and joy to their hearts.

Jesus makes it very clear later in this prayer that He is also praying for all future disciples. We, too, can face rejection and persecution but still have joy, knowing how Jesus prayed and is still continuing to pray for us.

If we are genuine followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot expect to be loved by the world. Many suffer unbelievable persecution and often even torture and death because of their faithfulness to the Lord. Jesus knew this and He prayed that His followers would be protected from Satan and all his evil. When people do suffer persecution – even martyrdom -- it is our Lord, not Satan, who wins the battle and is glorified and His gospel is advanced.

It is not God’s will that His followers be taken out of the world. He leaves us here for a purpose, to do

His work here on earth. God does much of His work through us, His people.

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. John 17:17 (ESV)

Sanctify means “set apart”. Jesus prayed that His followers would be set apart from sin and the world unto God, by the truth. The truth being referred to is the Word of God. Our record of God’s Word of Truth is the Bible. It is the Word of God that teaches us how to know God, to be like God, and to grow in our walk with God.

There are no shortcuts. We can claim that the Spirit is leading us and we can claim to pray, but if we are not regularly absorbing and applying the Word of God, then we are not being a productive child of God. We must grow in our understanding and application of the Word of God. This was the prayer coming from the heart of Jesus.

As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. John 17:18-19 (ESV)

Jesus sends us into the world to be his ambassadors, as He was sent into the world by the Father. While Jesus was here on earth, He was totally set apart from the world unto the work God called Him to do. Because of His commitment to the Father’s work, we too can be set apart for His work. Jesus set the example and paved the way for us.

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. John 17:20-23 (ESV)

In these verses Jesus makes it clear that He is praying for all future disciples who would believe. That includes us today. Jesus prayed for us. Knowing that should be motivate us to do what He calls us to do and to be what He wants us to be. How can we fail with Jesus praying for us???

In many ways these verses are the heart of this prayer.

Jesus prayed that we would be one, as He and the Father are one. That is a high calling, but Jesus takes it even a step further. The reason for His prayer that we be one is so that we can be in the Father and in the Son. *God and the Son are in perfect oneness and unity, and if we are to be in the Father and in the Son, then we too must be in perfect unity with the character and purpose of God.* Once we grasp what Jesus is praying, we have to be in awe of this teaching from God.

This is certainly not a superficial surface level unity, but a oneness like Jesus and the Father are one. We are not just one with each other; we are to be one in the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. This oneness and unity is not just the absence of hostility. With God as our example, we must be one in purpose, one in love, one in commitment, and cooperating together to bring glory to our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who identify themselves as Christians but who are not willing to be one with God and with

fellow believers, will never fulfill the purpose for which God called them. When we are one with God, we cannot compromise our standards and, in any way, conform to the standards of this world. We can only be one with those who are one with God. We are not one with those who do not accept this high standard of oneness with God.

There is another amazing statement made in this section of Scripture. Jesus states that He has given us the glory that Jesus Himself received from the Father. God is a God of glory and He shares that glory with His Son. It is hard to understand that Jesus shares that glory with us. While we may find it hard to grasp, it is not hard to understand His reason for sharing His glory with us. God is a God of glory and if we are to be one with Him, then we too must be glorified. Jesus gives us His glory so that we can be one with Him and with the Father and we can be one with each other.

Now very carefully read and think about the following two sentences from this prayer of Jesus:

1. *“May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”* Verse 21 (NIV)
2. *“May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”* Verse 23 (NIV)

Jesus is teaching us through this prayer that when the followers of Jesus are unified and one with God, unsaved people will believe in Jesus. They will know that Jesus is from God and they will know that God loves them. The word “know” is not just a head knowledge but a life-changing knowledge and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Unified Christians are the foundation of evangelism. The world will be drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ when we are unified with God and with each other.

Where there is infighting, dissension and factions among Christians, unsaved people are not drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians can claim to have a burden for the lost and to have a heart for missions; yet, at times by their self-centered, selfish divisive actions they can drive people away from the Lord, and all the while claim to be “led by the Spirit”.

The heart of God is grieved and the world is repulsed when Christians are not unified. No wonder we are instructed to warn a divisive person and if he does not respond, we are to have nothing more to do with Him.

Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. Titus 3:10 (NIV)

It should be made clear that this is a prayer for unity among genuine disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not teaching that we should be one with churches or individuals who teach false doctrine or who are not committed to teaching and preaching the Word of God as authoritative truth revealed to man by God. At times there are minor doctrinal differences among Christians that should not be roadblocks to unity; however, we are not one with those who are not strongly committed to the Word of God as the final authority for doctrine and our way of life.

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that

you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” John 17:24-26 (ESV)

In these last verses of this prayer, the depth of the love of Jesus for us, His followers, is expressed. Jesus wants us to be with Him. Jesus, who fellowships with the Father and has millions of angels surrounding Him, still wants us to be with Him. This alone should cause us to have a deep appreciation for our Lord. He gave His life and suffered deeply for us and He wants us to be with Him forever.

Jesus makes the Father known to us, and it is His desire that the Father love us with the same love that the Father has for Jesus. It is an awesome truth that God loves us with the same love that He has for His own Son. And Jesus does not resent this shared love.

The Word of God is loaded with deep truth and the truths in this chapter are among the most profound. As we begin to grasp the depth of this prayer of Jesus, it is bound to have a profound impact on the way we pray.

In this prayer Jesus prayed for us. *I pray for them.* (verse 9) His prayer includes several specific requests. As we follow Jesus' example, these are requests that we should include in our own prayers for fellow believers.

1. He prayed for our protection. --- *protect them by the power of your name.*
2. He prayed for our protection from Satan. --- *protect them from the evil one.*
3. He prayed that we would be set apart unto God through His Word. --- *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*
4. He prayed that we would be one. --- *that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.*
5. He prayed that we would live in the Father and in the Son. --- *May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*
6. He prayed that we would be completely unified. --- *May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

We may never be able to pray to the Father like Jesus the Son prayed; however, we can learn much about prayer by seeing how Jesus prayed and what He prayed. Jesus was deeply concerned about the disciples and their spiritual well-being. We, too, should deeply desire fellowship with God and we should deeply love and pray for the spiritual well-being of our fellow believers.

When we follow the example of Jesus and pray with love for the Father and love for His people and with the same kinds of requests that Jesus prayed, we know that we are in tune with the heart of God.

The truths in this prayer are profound. In order to begin to grasp these truths, we need to read this prayer over and over again. Think about it and ask God to deepen your understanding. *Your life and your prayers will be immensely enriched.*

Chapter Three

Lord, Teach Us to Pray...

A study of the Lord's Prayer -- Luke 11 and Matthew 6

In Luke 11:1, one of the disciples said to Jesus, "*Lord, teach us to pray*". Jesus responded by saying:

And he said unto them, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." Luke 11:2-4 (KJV)

This is an extremely important teaching on prayer since Jesus gave it as a pattern for us to use in prayer. If we want to pray as God instructs us to pray, then we need to learn to use this pattern of prayer given to us to use by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Our prayers are certainly not limited to the words and phrases in this prayer, but our praying does need to fit into the concepts that are within this prayer.

This pattern for prayer is given to us twice in the Word of God -- once in this passage in Luke 11 and again in Matthew 6. In Matthew 6, Jesus was also teaching about prayer. In both of these passages, the pattern given for prayer is essentially the same.

Matthew 6:9-13 reads as follows:

This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)

Giving the same pattern twice emphasizes the importance of this teaching.

What Jesus taught in Matthew 6:1-8, just prior to giving this pattern for prayer, is important. In these verses we are taught:

- A. Not to do good things in order to be recognized by men.
- B. Not to give in order to be recognized by men.
- C. Not to pray in order to be recognized by men.
- D. When you pray, do not use meaningless repetition, ... Matthew 6:7a (NASB)

Obviously all four of these are important, but the last one seems especially relevant today. Jesus warned us not to use empty or meaningless repetition in our prayers. In other words, this is not a prayer given to be repeated word for word in a shallow or meaningless way. However, that is exactly what often takes place. This prayer is often used almost as a ritual with very little or no thought given to the contents of the prayer. That is far from the intent of Jesus in giving this pattern for praying. It is not necessarily wrong to repeat this prayer word for word. There are times when that may be appropriate. However, when that is done, those praying need to have a good understanding of what is being said and they need to have a reverence for God as they pray.

In this study guide we are going to look carefully at Matthew 6:9-13 to learn all we can about how our Lord Jesus Christ instructed us to pray.

One thing that became apparent to me as I prepared and wrote this chapter is that essentially every part of this prayer is a commitment to godliness. We cannot genuinely pray this God-given prayer without a desire to be a godly person – to be what God wants us to be and to live as He instructs us to live. As you begin and as you proceed through this study, commit yourself to being a godly person.

This pattern for prayer is short, but it is rich and deep in content. Carefully read it several times. Each time you read it, stop and think and meditate on each section so that you can begin to grasp some of the depths of this prayer. You need to take the time to do this before continuing this study.

This pattern for prayer focuses on glorifying God.

This pattern for prayer focuses our attention on God. This prayer does not focus on our health and our physical needs, but rather it focuses on what brings glory and honor to God. We were created by God to glorify Him, and this prayer will teach us to pray in such a way as to fulfill this purpose.

Our Father in heaven,

The beginning of this prayer focuses our attention on the eternal sovereign God of heaven who is our heavenly Father.

*...hallowed (reverenced) be your name,
...your kingdom come,
...your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

These three petitions are the heart of this prayer. All three focus directly on God. We pray that His name will be reverenced. We pray that He will rule and reign on earth, and we pray that His will and purpose will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

These first three petitions in this prayer are the heart of worshiping God. In worship we uplift God and we bow in reverence and submission to Him. We cannot genuinely pray this prayer without a heartfelt love, appreciation, submission, and a desire to exalt Him. These are all the heart of genuine worship.

This part of the prayer speaks directly to our motive for praying. In our prayers we must glorify, honor, and uplift God. Most of us tend to pray in order to promote our own will and desire rather than praying to uplift God.

Give us today our daily bread.

This part of the prayer is asking God to supply our daily physical needs. However, the focus is still on God. Even though most of us have plenty and all our daily physical needs are supplied, by praying this we recognize that it is God who supplies all our needs. If God stopped supplying, we would be in want very quickly.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

God is not only the provider of our physical needs; He also blesses us with all spiritual blessings. He forgives our sin and protects us from the “evil one” (Satan). This prayer recognizes God as the source of our spiritual health. Spiritual health is not from our “inner being” or from some kind of mystical or transcendental experience; it is from God and God alone. When we thoughtfully pray this prayer, we are recognizing this truth. When we live spiritually healthy lives, we are in a position to serve God and to glorify Him by the way we live.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

This prayer ends in pure worship and praise of God. Again, the prayer ends with its focus on God rather than on man.

This pattern for prayer helps us to understand how we should relate to God.

This pattern for prayer helps us understand the right kinds of relationships that should exist between us and God. This is another foundation of prayer. If we have a skewed idea of our relationship with God, our prayers will not be effective.

Our Father — He is our Father. We are His children.

in heaven — He is the eternal sovereign God and creator of the universe. We are His created people on earth.

hallowed be your name --- He is holy and pure. We who are sinful must recognize His holiness.

your kingdom come --- He is the king. We are His subjects.

your will be done — He is the master. We are His servants.

Give us this day our daily bread — He is the provider. We are the ones He provides for.

Forgive us our debts — He is the forgiver. We are the forgiven.

And lead us not into temptation — He is our spiritual leader. We are His followers.

but deliver us from the evil one — He is our protector. We are the protected.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever — He is the one to be worshiped and praised forever. We are the ones to give Him praise and worship forever.

In all of these relationships God is the superior partner, and we are the followers. If any of these relationships are not as they should be, our prayer life will be hindered.

This pattern for prayer teaches us right attitudes about God.

Again, this establishes another important foundation for prayer. Attitudes are important. Without a right attitude, our prayers will be ineffective.

Our --- We must have an unselfish spirit. In this prayer He is not “my Father”; but instead, He is “our Father”. We pray for the good of the whole family, not just for our own good.

Father — We must have an attitude of loving, honoring, and obeying our Father.

in heaven — We can have a confident victorious spirit. We serve the eternal sovereign all-powerful God and creator of the universe.

hallowed be your name — We must have a reverent spirit. His holiness demands that we have a reverence and awe of who He is.

your kingdom come — We must have a thirsty, longing spirit. The deep desire of our heart must be for God to reign in our own life and over all the earth.

your kingdom come — We must have a loyal spirit.

your will be done — We must have a submissive spirit.

Give us this day our daily bread — We must have a dependent spirit. We must recognize that all that we have is from God.

Forgive us our debts — We must have a spirit of repentance. Christians must hate sin and be quick to confess any known sin in their life and commit themselves to turning from that sin.

as we also have forgiven our debtors — We must have an obedient attitude.

And lead us not into temptation. — A Christian must have a clean and pure spirit. We do not want to give in to the temptation to sin.

but deliver us from the evil one — A Christian must have a wise discerning spirit.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. --- Christians must have an attitude of praise, worship, and of exalting God.

Teach Us to Pray -- A Closer Look

There is an awesome depth to this pattern for prayer. Seldom, if ever, has there been such depth in so few words. I am seeing again that I cannot fully grasp all that God would have us to learn. I am finding it difficult to express in words what the Spirit of God has taught me through the study of this

prayer. It is my prayer that the Spirit of God will teach you as you seek to digest what God wants you to learn through this prayer.

1. “Our” Father...

In this prayer, “our Father” is used instead of “my Father”. In the entire prayer there are no personal pronouns such as “I”, “me”, or “mine”. The word “our” indicates we are part of a family of believers. Our family is a large worldwide family. We love and care about our worldwide family even though we only personally know a few of them.

Since God is “our” Father, this is not just a prayer for my own individual needs; it is a prayer for the whole family of God. When we use this pattern for prayer, we not only commit ourselves to living God-honoring lives, but we also pray that our brothers and sisters in the Lord, throughout the world, will live lives that honor our Father.

In our own local church, we fellowship with brothers and sisters in the Lord who love and encourage us. Together we worship and praise our Lord. And together we build up and encourage each other to walk close to our God. What a joy and a blessing to be part of the family of God who are one in their love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we genuinely love fellow Christians, we will pray for them. We pray for the needs of individuals we personally know, and we pray for the needs of those we only hear about. When we hear about the suffering and persecution of fellow believers in distant parts of the earth, it should drive us to our knees in earnest intercession for those brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Praying “our Father” does not mean that it is wrong to pray for our own individual needs. However, the underlying motive for praying for our own personal needs should be so that we will be equipped to do the work that He calls us to do.

2. Our “Father”...

One of the awesome teachings of the Word of God is that we are adopted into the family of God. God adopts as His own children those who believe in Him. We are His children and He is our Father.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ... John 1:12 (NIV)

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Romans 8:15 (KJV)

...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, Ephesians 1:5 (NKJV)

When we were lost and helpless, He adopted us as His own. He loves us with a perfect love. In fact, He loves us in the same way He loves Jesus, His very own Son.

I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. John 17:23 (NASB)

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: 1 John 3:1 (KJV)

We, as earthly fathers, often fall short of being the kind of fathers we should be. Our Father in heaven never falls short. He will, without fail, be our provider, our leader, our counselor, and the source of our strength.

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matthew 6:31-33 (KJV)

A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. Psalm 68:5 (NKJV)

Recognizing God as our loving caring Father has a major impact on our attitude as we come to Him in prayer. We come to Him as one of His loved children, not as a outsider begging to be heard.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

While it is right for us to recognize God as our loving Father, we must also remember that a father is to be obeyed. We must submit to Him and obey His instructions. This is not hard to do since He is such a loving father.

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. 1 John 5:3 (NKJV)

Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you? Deuteronomy 32:6 (NIV)

When God's people stray, the Father is eagerly waiting to forgive the one who strays and to restore him to the joy of fellowship with Himself. This is illustrated in the parable of the rebellious son who strayed from his father's house.

And he (the straying son) arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

Luke 15:20 (KJV)

In this short section we have looked at God as our father from two perspectives. Both of these perspectives are equally true. First, *God is our loving Father who deeply loves and cares for us -- His children, and second, God as our Father is to be loved, respected, and obeyed.*

Both of these truths should have a major impact on how we pray. Here are three key issues relating to our prayers:

1. *Since God deeply loves us and promises to answer our prayers, we can come to Him as a compassionate loving Father. We can speak to Him about the deepest longings of our heart. He cares and He understands. He is not out to condemn us, but to bring healing to our body, soul and spirit and to provide for all our needs. What a Father we have!!!*
2. *Recognize that you are dependent on Him for all that you are and all that you have. Regularly thank Him for all He has done and is doing for you.*
3. *We also come to God our Father in love and submission and a desire to be obedient and to do His will. We do not demand that God do our will, but in love we submit to the will and purpose of Him.*

3. *Our Father “in heaven”,*

It is very true that God is our loving caring Father. But we must also remember that He is not an earthly human father. He is our Father “in heaven”. We must not forget that He is the eternal sovereign God who created the universe and who has all power and who has all knowledge. He is sovereign over all. We must not let ourselves become shallow or casual in our attitudes and thoughts about God.

There are many Scriptures that teach the sovereignty, the glory, the power, and the majesty of God. Here are three of them:

God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:15b-16 (NIV)

Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, ... Deuteronomy 4:39-40a (NASB)

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. Acts 17:24-25 (NIV)

In Exodus 19 there is a powerful demonstration of who God is. All of these Scriptures should give us a proper perspective of who God is. Let them deepen your awe and reverence of God.

When we pray, we recognize God as our loving compassionate Father and we also recognize and revere Him as the eternal sovereign God and creator of the universe. As the sovereign God, the creator of the universe, we must have a deep reverential fear, awe, and respect for God. He is to be worshiped in every part of our life.

Understanding God as the sovereign God who created us and everything else that exists should impact our prayers in at least three different ways.

1. *The first is to recognize that He, as the sovereign God, has the ability, the power, the understanding, and the wisdom to answer our prayers in the way that is best for us, and He is able to supply all our needs.*
2. *The second is that we must have a deep reverence and awe of who God is and for what He has done for us.*
3. *The third is to consciously worship and praise Him for who He is and what He has done for us.*

4. *“hallowed” be your name,*

The root meaning of “hallowed” is holy. The eternal sovereign God and creator of the universe is holy. He is completely separated from all that is sinful or evil. In response to His holiness, we should reverence and worship Him. Understanding this will certainly have an impact on the way we pray.

This part of the prayer lifts God up to majestic heights that we, as sinful man, cannot begin to fathom. As a holy God, there is no hint of evil in His character. He is absolutely pure. He is totally and completely separated from all that is sinful or evil. Our human nature is so prone to sin and we are so surrounded by a world of sin that we cannot begin to fully grasp what it means to be holy. Yet, in spite of our inability to grasp what it means to be holy, we need to come to a basic understanding and appreciation of the holiness of God.

I do not know how to teach or to write about the holiness of God. I can only bring to your attention a few of the many Scriptures that teach the holiness of God. Take time to read over these verses and think about them. Let the awesome truth of God’s holiness penetrate your heart and soul.

...Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. Isaiah 6:3b (KJV)

"Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you -- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" Exodus 15:11 (NIV)

The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, Isaiah 8:13 (NIV)

And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" Revelation 4:8b (NKJV)

When we recognize God as an absolutely pure holy God, it causes us to realize how sinful we are. Recognizing God’s holiness should cause us to repent and confess our sin, enabling us to come into His presence with a clean heart, ready to receive direction and blessing from God.

The more we recognize the holiness of God, the more we realize how deeply He loves us. If we do not understand His holiness, we will never understand how far He went to bring us salvation. In spite of

our sinfulness, our holy God still deeply loves us. He loves us so much that He sent His only Son to come and die for us so that we can be forgiven of our sin, receive His righteousness, walk with Him and enjoy fellowship with Him. Not only can we walk with Him here on earth, we will live with Him in heaven and enjoy the abundance of His grace forever. Our holy God has blessed us beyond our ability to grasp or to understand.

When we pray, we must recognize and acknowledge God as holy. If we do not grasp the truth that God is holy, we will never even begin to correctly understand God. We will never be able to walk with Him in the way He desires us to walk, or to pray as He would have us to pray, or to worship as He would have us to worship.

One major way we should respond to the holiness of God is to worship Him.

Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.

Psalm 96:9 (NIV)

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

Psalm 29:2 (NIV)

Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy. Psalm 99:5 (KJV)

A second response to the holiness of God is to strive to live a holy life.

...but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV)

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Ephesians 5:3-4 (NIV)

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; 1 Timothy 2:8 (ESV)

Again, understanding God's holiness will have a profound impact on what and how we pray. Recognizing God's holiness should cause us to repent and confess our sin, enabling us to come into His presence with a clean heart, ready to receive direction and blessing from God.

When we genuinely pray “hallowed be your name” we...

...recognize our sinfulness and regularly confess our sin to Him.

...commit ourselves to living a holy life.

...commit ourselves to genuinely revering and worshiping God.

...pray that our fellow believers will live holy lives.

...pray that fellow believers will revere and worship our holy God.

5. *hallowed be your “name”*,

When we recognize God as a holy God and we glorify Him by living clean pure lives, we hallow God’s name.

An Old Testament Biblical word that is the opposite of hallow or holy is “profane”. The word is quite broad in meaning; *however, when used in reference to profaning God’s name, it means that He is treated like something common rather than one who is to be revered.* To profane God’s name is to treat Him as if He is a common ordinary being.

They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: Leviticus 21:6 (KJV)

Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am the LORD, who makes you holy. Leviticus 22:32 (NIV)

In Scriptural examples, the name of God was profaned by the way the people acted.

Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. Ezekiel 36:22-23 (ESV)

...they defiled my holy name by their detestable practices... Ezekiel 43:8b (NIV)

For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts. "But you are profaning it,... Malachi 1:11-12a (NASB)

The Scriptural examples of profaning the name of God are all taken from the Old Testament. While the settings may be different, the principles are just as true today as they were then.

We who claim to be followers of God must be careful not to profane His name or to treat Him as if He were a common ordinary being. This is very similar to taking God’s name in vain, which is a violation of the third commandment. Most people think that taking God’s name in vain is to use God’s name as a swear word. That certainly is true, but taking God’s name in vain goes far beyond that. Any light, empty, or frivolous use of God’s name is taking God’s name in vain.

However, the concept of profaning God’s name or using His name in vain goes far beyond our attitude when speaking about God. *We profane God’s name when, by our actions, we do not hallow or revere His name.*

When God’s people, together as one, hallow or reverence the name of God, the world will see it. When we, together as one, hallow God’s name, unsaved people will come to know and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. (Carefully read John 17:20-23.) When God’s people do not hallow God’s name, unsaved people are repulsed and want nothing to do with our God.

Another way we profane God's holy name is to treat His Word, the Bible, in a light or casual way. Many Christians will say, "I love the Lord", but they seldom read or study the Word of God. Many churches do not commit to a strong Bible teaching program. Pastors don't bother to diligently study the Word so they can teach it correctly. Teachers don't bother to prepare and often don't care enough to get to their classes on time. Very few pastors, teachers, or laymen take the time to learn to pray as God instructed us in His Word. By our actions and attitudes, we profane the name of God and, at the same time, piously claim to be led by the Spirit of God.

The prayer, "hallowed be your name", is a prayer that God's people will live godly lives so that the name of God will be lifted up and exalted.

Following are some ways in which we can either hallow or profane the holy name of God:

1. We hallow His name by diligently reading and absorbing His Word.
We profane His name by neglecting His Word.
2. We hallow His name by obeying instructions given in the Word of God.
We profane His name by ignoring or disobeying the Word of God.
3. We hallow His name by learning to pray as He instructed us to pray.
We profane His name by ignoring His instructions on prayer.
4. We hallow His name by giving Him genuine Biblical praise and worship.
We profane His name by giving self-centered and insincere praise and worship.
5. We hallow His name by using our talents and abilities to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.
We profane His name by refusing to serve Him.
6. We hallow His name when God's people are one in the Lord.
We profane His name by disunity and quarreling.
7. We hallow His name by using all our finances in a way that promotes the kingdom of God.
We profane His name by using our finances to fulfill our own selfish interests.

This list could go on and on. Now you think of some ways that we hallow or profane His name.

We hallow His name by.....
We profane His name by.....

When we pray "hallowed be your name", we pray that...

...we will live a life that demonstrates a reverence for a holy God.
...that people will be drawn to God by our attitudes and our actions.
...that our worship will be genuine.
...that our fellow believers will genuinely worship and revere God.
...that people will be drawn to God by the attitudes and actions of the church.

6. *your kingdom come,*

The kingdom of God is speaking of the reign and of the authority of God.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Timothy 1:17 (KJV)

He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen. 1 Timothy 6:15a-16 (NASB)

God is eternal and He is sovereign. God has always been in control and He always will be in control. In this sense, the Kingdom of God has always existed and it always will exist. There are numerous Scriptures which teach this.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations. Psalm 145:13 (NKJV)

The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all. Psalm 103:19 (NASB)

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever. Revelation 11:15 (NASB)

The authority and the reign of God are absolute; yet, for a limited time, God is allowing Satan to deceive man. Satan brought sin into the world and he is leading men in rebellion against the kingdom and the authority of God.

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit (Satan) that now works in the children of disobedience: Ephesians 2:2 (KJV)

While God rules over all, there is also an aspect of the kingdom of God of which only genuine believers are a part. God has authority over all that exists; however, those who choose not to submit to that authority will never be part of the kingdom of God.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:3 (KJV)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (ESV)

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14 (NASB)

Praying “*your kingdom come*” is a prayer with many different sides to it. Following are several different perspectives to this prayer:

A. Praying “*your kingdom come*” is an evangelistic prayer.

When we pray “*your kingdom come*”, it is a prayer that lost people will be genuinely saved and become part of the kingdom of God. In the Greek, there is an urgency in this prayer. We pray that God’s kingdom will come now. It must come now because people are in rebellion against God and are going to an eternal hell.

They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Psalm 145:11-12 (KJV)

Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Matthew 7:21 (NIV)

B. When we pray “*your kingdom come*”, it is also a prayer of submission to the authority of God in our own life. *We cannot genuinely pray “your kingdom come”, and then resist His rule in our own life.*

C. Since this is a prayer for the whole family of God, we are also praying that God will reign in the lives of our fellow Christians.

Remember that in this pattern for prayer we are praying for the entire body of Christ. We not only commit ourselves to living godly lives, but we pray that our brothers and sisters in Christ will also live godly lives.

D. Praying “*your kingdom come*” is also a commitment to action. *We cannot pray “your kingdom come”, and then do nothing to promote the reign of God on earth.* When we pray this prayer, it is a prayer of total commitment to working to advance the kingdom of God on earth. We do not seek to promote our own agenda; instead, our whole vision and our goal is to advance the kingdom of God.

E. When we pray “*your kingdom come*”, we are praying that righteousness and justice will prevail on earth.

Carefully read the following verses:

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you. Psalm 89:14 (ESV)

He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice. Psalm 9:8 (NIV)

...that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD. Jeremiah 9:24b (NASB)

But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness. Isaiah 5:16 (NIV)

As Christians, we rebel against all the sin and injustice in the world today. Our hearts are grieved at rampant sin. We are repulsed by the world's entertainment which glorifies unrighteousness or sin. We are repulsed by the selfishness and materialism in our society. We are repulsed by the millions of babies being murdered by abortion. We are repulsed by the injustice in our courts. We are repulsed by abuse of all kinds. Our heart's desire and our prayer is that the kingdom of God will prevail on earth and that righteousness and justice will be done on earth as it is in heaven. *Again, when we pray "your kingdom come", we are praying that righteousness and justice will prevail on earth.*

Praying "*your kingdom come*" is a prayer for worldwide godliness; however, it is also a commitment to personal godliness. We commit every part of our body, soul, and spirit to be holy, righteous, and just. We separate ourselves from the evil, and love what is right in God's sight.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. 1 John 2:15-17 (NASB)

F. When we pray "*your kingdom come*", we are praying that the literal earthly one thousand year reign of Christ will come quickly.

When we pray "*your kingdom come*", we are praying that the earthly one thousand year reign of our Lord Jesus Christ that follows His second coming will come soon. We are tired of the reign of sin and Satan on earth. We are tired of this sin-cursed earth. We long for the day that He will reign in righteousness and justice, and for this we pray.

As a review, when we pray "*your kingdom come*", we are praying:

- A. That lost people be brought into the kingdom of God.
- B. That we will honor the King, by our love, service, and worship.
- C. That our fellow believers will also honor the King by their love, service, and worship.
- D. It is a commitment to action. We strive to promote the kingdom of God on earth.
- E. That righteousness and justice will be done on earth.
- F. That the personal one-thousand-year reign of Christ will come soon.

7. *your will be done*

Praying "*your will be done*" is also clearly a prayer of personal commitment. It is a complete giving up of our own will and totally surrendering to the will of God. It would be hypocritical to pray "*your will be done*" and not be strongly committed to knowing and doing the will of God.

Jesus Christ Himself is the ultimate example of submission to the will of God. Carefully read the following verses. They show the depth of Jesus' desire to do the will of God. In submission to the will of God, Jesus died on the cross and provided us salvation. Verses like these should stir our souls and challenge our own level of commitment.

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.
John 4:34 (NASB)

He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." Mark 14:35-36 (NKJV)

We, as sinful people, cannot begin to understand how agonizing it must have been for the holy Son of God to become all of the filthy sin of every sinner who has ever lived. Yet, because He loved the Father and desired to do the Father's will, He went to the cross and paid the price for all of our sins. Jesus did not have to die; He chose to die. Because Jesus desired to do the Father's will, you and I can have our sins forgiven and look forward to an eternity with God forever.

Praying "your will be done" is a commitment to absorbing and applying truth from the Word of God. It is a commitment to putting into practice the whole counsel of God as it is taught in the Word. What many do not seem to realize is that, by far, most of the will of God is revealed to us in His Word, the Bible. The Scriptures deal with essentially all situations that we normally face in life. When we want to know the will of God for our lives, it is very important that we search the Scriptures to find what Biblical principles apply to the situations that we face. When we honestly do this, we will have the answer to most of our questions relating to the will of God.

When we, as Christians, regularly read, absorb, and apply the Word of God, our will becomes more conformed to the will of God. As this happens, we can expect positive answers to our prayers.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. John 15:7 (NASB)

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. 1 John 5:14-15 (NASB)

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4 (ESV)

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we should delight in doing God's will.

I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8 (NASB)

As people, it is natural for us to want our own way. The world says to stand up for your rights and do what you think is best for you. When we commit ourselves to being disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, this whole outlook on life changes. We no longer focus on ourselves; we focus on the Lord. We seek to hallow His name and we seek to promote the kingdom of God, not our own kingdom. The deep

desire of our hearts is to do the will of God. It is complete and total submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many do not believe that we should be concerned with the will of God when we pray. I have both heard and read that to pray “*your will be done*” is a cop-out and a lack of genuine faith. Some have said that it is not genuine prayer unless we ask for something we desire and we must expect a positive answer in a very short period of time. We should determine exactly what we want, pray for it in faith, and God is obligated to provide it. This kind of teaching often mixes truth and error, and often the attitude behind it is wrong to the core. If God must conform to our will, then He is, in fact, no longer God.

A fundamental truth is that when we absorb the Word of God, and we grow in our understanding of the Word, and commit to putting it into practice, our will becomes more and more in tune with His will, and we have an underlying desire to glorify Him. As this happens, we can expect positive answers to our prayer, and sometimes it may be answered in a very short period of time.

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. Psalm 37:4-5 (ESV)

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. 1 John 5:14-15 (NASB)

Each individual Christian needs to carefully and honestly evaluate his/her motive for praying. Are we praying because we want God to do our will? Are we trying to get God to do what we think is right? Is your prayer based on genuine Biblical teaching? Is your prayer focusing on yourself or is it focusing on God?

Committing ourselves to doing the will of God does not mean that we are simply robots with no desire of our own. God gives tremendous responsibility to those who serve Him with their whole heart, and He expects them to think, to have wisdom, and to make wise decisions. Doing the will of God is often exciting and challenging, requiring all of our mental and physical abilities. We are not simply unthinking robots or puppets. It is when we insist on having our own way that life becomes fruitless and frustrating.

Praying “*your will be done*” is worldwide in scope. In the same way that “*your kingdom come*” is also worldwide in scope. As Christians, we deeply desire and pray that the will of God will be done throughout the earth and the sin and rebellion against God will come to an end.

This kind of submission will have a profound effect on how we pray.

When we pray “*your will be done*”, we are...

- ...committing ourselves to doing the will of God.
- ...praying that the will of God would be done in every part of our life.
- ...committing ourselves to studying the Word of God to better understand the will of God.
- ...praying that our fellow believers will know and do the will of God.
- ...that the will of God be done throughout the earth.

Since God gives us instructions in His Word, making His will known to us, we can pray that we will follow His instructions and do His will and that our fellow believers will also follow His instructions and do His will. There are limitless situations in which we can pray, “*your will be done*”. It is a valid prayer for essentially every situation here on earth. Wow, I guess we better get started!!!

8. *on earth as it is in heaven.*

This pattern for prayer given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ is apparently written in typical Jewish poetic style. This parallel writing style indicates that the phrase “on earth as it is in heaven” applies to all three of the petitions that come before it. In other words, we can very legitimately pray each of the following prayers.

“hallowed be your name *on earth as it is in heaven*”.

“your kingdom come *on earth as it is in heaven*”.

“your will be done *on earth as it is in heaven*”.

God wants His name to be hallowed on earth as it is in heaven. He wants His kingdom to rule on earth as it does in heaven, and He wants His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

No sin or rebellion against the will of God exists in heaven. When Satan rebelled against God, he was immediately expelled.

In heaven there are multitudes of angels. In the Bible there are some three hundred references to angels. In the many of these references, they are actively serving and obediently doing the will of God.

**Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his Word.
Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.** Psalm 103:20-21 (NIV)

The angels eagerly and joyfully serve. They are not reluctant servants. They are quick to obey.

In heaven, the name of God is revered, praised and worshiped. In heaven, no one rebels against the reign and authority of our holy God. In heaven, the angels quickly and eagerly serve God and do His will without questioning and doubting. These are high standards but this is what God asks of us. We are to pray that God’s name be hallowed on earth as it is in heaven. We are to pray that His kingdom reigns on earth as it does in heaven, and we are to pray that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And we are to eagerly and quickly do His bidding.

9. *Give us today our daily bread.*

Here the focus of the prayer changes. So far, the prayer has focused on having a right perspective of God, having the right attitudes about God, and how we should respond to Him. Now the prayer begins to deal with man’s needs. The first request in this part of the prayer is for the provision of our daily needs.

However, even as this pattern for prayer begins to deal with our needs, it still focuses on God as the

provider of our needs. One reason we revere, worship, and serve God is because He is the provider of our daily needs.

When we pray “*give us today our daily bread*”, we pray that God will supply all our physical needs such as food, a home, clothing, health, and transportation.

Here in America, it may seem a little silly to pray for food. Most of us have food in abundance; and we have all of our basic physical needs met. In fact, many of us are more likely to pray, “Lord, keep me from eating so much.,” rather than asking God to supply more food.

God has indeed abundantly provided for us. Think about what God has provided for us to eat. In the Bible, God provided many varieties of fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, dairy products, spices and other condiments. God has provided nutritious foods in abundance.

However, in spite of our abundant provision, we are still to ask for our daily needs. *When we pray for our daily needs, we are recognizing that we are completely dependent on Him for our daily needs and it is God who gives us the ability to work and earn money so that we can provide for ourselves and our families.* If it were not for the Lord, we would have no food, homes, shelter, clothing, health, transportation, or anything else. We must be thankful for all that God has supplied for us.

Praying “give us today our daily bread” reminds us that God is our provider and it should cause us to thank and praise Him because He has so abundantly provided for us.

There are many places in the Bible that God promises to supply our needs. In the following verses, “all these things” is talking about the basic necessities of life, such as food, shelter, and clothing.

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6:33-34 (NASB)

We need to remember that we are praying for “our” daily bread. That means that we are praying for the physical needs of our fellow Christians as well as for our own needs. In many parts of the world they do not have the abundance that we have here in America. Many pray for daily provision because they do not have much food or sufficient shelter. We need to pray with them that God will provide their basic necessities of life.

This part of this pattern for prayer focuses on God as the one who supplies. It recognizes that He is the source of all our physical needs, and it teaches us to live one day at a time in the confidence that He will meet those needs. We must not take our abundant supply for our physical needs for granted. We must be thankful, and we must recognize that it is God who abundantly supplies for us.

When we pray “*give us today our daily bread*”...

...we ask for the basic needs of life.

...we ask that God will supply the needs of fellow believers around the world.

...we thank and praise God for His abundant supply.

10. *Forgive us our debts*, (Matthew 6:12) *Forgive us our sins*, (Luke 11:4)

In the previous section of this pattern for prayer given by Jesus, it deals with our daily physical needs. Now the prayer moves on to our spiritual needs. As Christians, we need to continually deal with sin in our life. We do this by quickly asking forgiveness and then turning away from that sin.

To pray “*forgive us our debts*” is the same as praying for forgiveness of sin. When we sin, we incur a debt to God. When we genuinely confess sin and ask for forgiveness, the sin and the debt are forgiven. In order to correctly understand this prayer, we need to understand two basic kinds of Biblical forgiveness. The Bible does not use the terms “judicial forgiveness” or “parental forgiveness” but they are good descriptions of two aspects of God’s forgiveness.

A. Judicial Forgiveness

The first kind of Biblical forgiveness is sometimes called “judicial forgiveness”. When an unsaved person genuinely believes, turns from his sin, and puts his faith in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for his sin, then that person’s sin is forgiven. All his sin – past, present, and future -- is forgiven. When his sin is forgiven, he is justified and righteousness is credited to his account. He becomes a child of God, and he will spend eternity with God forever.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Ephesians 1:7 (KJV)

For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” Hebrews 8:12 (NIV)

God’s forgiveness of sinners is not automatic. He does not forgive all sinners. His forgiveness is conditional on their believing on Him which includes their willingness to turn from their sinful lifestyle.

God gives this pattern for prayer to individuals who are already saved. They have already received “judicial forgiveness”. A saved person does not need be saved again but he does need to ask for “parental forgiveness”.

B. Parental Forgiveness

The second kind of forgiveness is what is sometimes identified as “parental forgiveness”. When a person who is already genuinely saved commits sin, his fellowship with God and his joy are interrupted. He is still a child of God, but the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, is being quenched by the sin in his life. When a Christian confesses his sin, the Spirit again has control of that person’s life and his fellowship with God is restored, and that person can resume growing in his walk with God.

...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV)

One excellent example of parental forgiveness is in the life of King David. David was a child of God; yet he sinned grievously. When David was confronted with his sin, he admitted his sin and repented.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD" – and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Psalm 32:5 (NIV)

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Psalm 51:12 (NIV)

David confessed his sin and then prayed for renewed joy. David would still suffer many consequences of his sin, but the joy of walking with God was restored when he confessed his sin.

The book of 1 John was written to Christians. One of the reasons this book was written was to teach Christians how they could have fellowship with the Father, with fellow Christians, and how their joy could be full.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

1 John 1:8-10 (NKJV)

Notice that when we confess our sin we are cleansed from “all unrighteousness”. What a truth!!! When we genuinely confess sin God completely cleans us up. We should respond with thanksgiving and praise to our loving and compassionate Lord.

We, as believers, need to regularly confess sin. Immediately after we realize that we have sinned we need to confess it. For most all of us this is a daily necessity. This keeps our walk with God satisfying and productive and our spiritual growth is unhindered.

When Christians refuse to repent and to confess their sin, it robs them of their fellowship with God, their fellowship with other Christians, and their joy. When we sin, we smear and profane the name of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Deliberate unconfessed sin can result in our being disciplined or chastised by God.

When we genuinely confess sin and repent, it is an indication that we want to live godly lives. We are grieved that our fellowship with God is being hindered and we want to glorify and please Him.

All of us need to carefully examine our lives to see if there is any known sin that we have not confessed. Then we can genuinely commit ourselves to walking close to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Psalms 139:23-24 is a good prayer for Christians to pray. It is an indication that we want God to reveal any sin in our life, and it shows a desire to live a godly life.

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV)

When we pray “forgive us our debts” or “forgive us our sins”, ...

...we are praying that God will forgive us of the specific sin(s) we are confessing.

...we are praying that He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

...it is a prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude for being forgiven.

...we are praying that we will live godly lives.

11. as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Christians are clearly instructed to forgive each other.

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32 (KJV)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Colossians 3:12-13 (NIV)

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. Mark 11:25 (NIV)

In the previous section we looked at the phrase in the Lord's prayer which states “*forgive us our sins*”. Now we see the following phrase “*as we also have forgiven our debtors*”. What this tells us is that we have no right to pray “*forgive us our sins*” if we are not being obedient and forgiving those who have sinned against us. *If Christians are unwilling to forgive, they are being disobedient and cannot sincerely pray any of this pattern for prayer.*

Hanging on to anger is the root cause of unforgiveness. Anger and unforgiveness go hand in hand. The only reason we hang on to anger is that deep down we would like to hurt someone or to get even with them. In the Word of God, we are instructed to get rid of our anger. In the following verses notice the correlation between anger and forgiveness.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV)

Many people, including Christians, have trouble forgiving someone who has wronged them. Again, the only reason for hanging on to malice and anger is to seek revenge. *For Christians, one very practical way to forgive is to simply choose to let God handle the revenge.* God promises that He will repay and that He will do it justly. When we make the mental choice to let God handle revenge and that we will no longer desire or seek revenge, then it is not hard to fully forgive.

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Romans 12:19 (NIV)

For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." Hebrews 10:30 (NKJV)

To forgive is a mental choice. Once we choose to let God handle the revenge and we make the mental choice to forgive, we may still have negative feelings, but with time our feelings will come into line with our mental choice to forgive. However, if we never make that mental choice to forgive, then our feelings of anger and unforgiveness may never completely leave us.

The often-used phrase "forgive and forget" is not a Biblical term. We can choose to forgive, but there are times that we will never forget the offence. While we may never forget, that does not mean that we will keep thinking about it all the time. Forgiving will free us from sinful thoughts and we can move on in our walk with the Lord. This kind of forgiveness allows a person to be at peace with himself and to fellowship with God. He can enjoy the fruit of the Spirit in his life.

Our forgiving a person must not be conditional on the offending person's repentance. We are to forgive even if they do not repent, ask forgiveness, or make restitution. Our forgiveness may or may not result in a restoration of full fellowship with the offending brother, especially when that brother has not chosen to seek for a restoration of fellowship with you.

Forgiving a brother or sister or being forgiven does not free someone from the Biblical responsibility to make restitution for the wrong done. There is no Biblical teaching that indicates that when a brother is forgiven, that he is freed from the responsibility to make restitution for the wrong. If anything, just the opposite is true. Making restitution is evidence of genuine repentance.

Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

Luke 19:8 (NASB)

Matthew 6:14-15 adds a footnote at the end of this prayer that has been misunderstood by some people.

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV)

Some have taken this to mean that before God can save us, we must forgive those who sin against us. This would make our salvation dependent, at least partially, on our own actions or works rather than it being a gift from God.

This footnote in Matthew 6:14-15 is speaking about Christians and fellowship with God. It is not talking about getting saved. It is talking about parental forgiveness, not judicial forgiveness. This is a prayer for Christians, not for the unsaved. The prayer of an unsaved person is a prayer of repentance and accepting the free gift of salvation. This is a prayer of Christians asking for forgiveness and restoration of fellowship and joy in our walk with God.

As we have seen, God has instructed Christians to forgive. Not forgiving is disobedience. When Christians hang on to anger and are unwilling to forgive others, we cannot expect to have God's parental forgiveness and to walk in fellowship with Him. When we choose to forgive those who have

sinned against us, then we can expect parental forgiveness and restoration of joy and fellowship with God. This is what is being taught in Matthew 6:14-15.

This prayer is a commitment to obedience. Again, we cannot honestly pray this prayer unless we desire to be godly people which is demonstrated by our willingness to forgive those who sin against us.

12. And lead us not into temptation,

When we pray “*forgive us our debts*”, we are dealing with past sin in our lives. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, it must not only be our desire to be forgiven of past sin but also to keep from sin in the future and to live a life worthy of our calling. When we pray “*lead us not into temptation*”, we are committing ourselves to living a holy life – separated from sin and evil.

A natural question that comes up from this part of the prayer is “Why do we need to pray this part of the prayer since the Word teaches us that God does not tempt us to sin?”.

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. James 1:13 (NASB)

I cannot fully answer that question; however, while it is clear that God does not tempt us to sin, He does allow Satan to tempt us. It is Satan, not God, who does the tempting to sin.

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...”
Acts 5:3a (ESV)

Temptation can also come from within our own selves.

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. James 1:14 (NASB)

God even allowed His own Son, Jesus, to be tempted by Satan.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
Matthew 4:1 (NKJV)

Since Jesus Himself was tempted throughout His life, He is able to help and strengthen us when we are tempted.

For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. Hebrews 2:18 (NASB)

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
Hebrews 4:15-16 (NASB)

God promises us that we will not be tempted more than we can resist.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He drew strength from the Word of God. In all three of the temptations, Jesus quoted the Word of God to Satan.

It is very important to recognize that it is the Word of God that gives the strength to resist the temptations of Satan. We need to daily absorb the Word so that we can be strong in times of temptations. We cannot wait until we are tempted, and then expect to begin absorbing the Word for strength. We must continually absorb the Word so that we will continually be strong in the face of temptation.

Christians continually need to be on guard, ready to resist temptation.

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Matthew 26:41 (NIV)

It is often in times of trials that we are tempted to question our faith and doubt the trustworthiness of God and the Word of God. Our faith in God can be severely tested and we may be tempted to question and doubt if God is really able or willing to sustain us. Trials can either strengthen our faith, or they can result in a weakened faith.

When we go through trials in life, we need to remember how deeply God loves us.

..."Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; ...

Isaiah 43:1b-3a (NIV)

Christians must expect to go through difficult times. Jesus Himself suffered and we, too, must expect to suffer at times.

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Philippians 1:29 (KJV)

But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 1 Peter 2:20b-21 (NKJV)

When we endure trials, we glorify our Lord Jesus Christ. Being faithful through trials strengthens our faith.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. James 1:2-3 (NASB)

When we pray “*lead us not into temptation*”, it is a commitment to living a clean godly life. While we do not like to be tempted or to go through trials, when it does happen, we ask God for help and strength and we choose to resist the temptation, to grow in our walk with Him, and to live a holy and godly life.

Since this pattern for prayer says “*lead us not into temptation*”, it is not only a prayer that I will live a godly life but that our brothers and sisters in the Lord will also live a godly life.

When we pray “*lead us not into temptation*”, we...

- ...commit ourselves to living a godly life.
- ...pray that our fellow believers will live a godly life.
- ...ask God to give us the wisdom and strength to resist and not give in to temptations to sin.
- ...commit ourselves to being faithful, even in times of trial and temptation.
- ...commit ourselves to being alert so that temptations will not catch us unprepared.

13. deliver us from the evil one.

It is fitting that the final request in this prayer is that we be delivered from Satan and all his evil influences and deception. Satan is the archenemy of God. He hates God and he hates God’s people. If he could, he would destroy every Christian; he would destroy the Word of God; he would destroy every non-Christian to keep them from coming to God; and, if he could, he would destroy God Himself.

However, I do not believe that we need to focus on Satan, nor is it wise to do so. If we keep our focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, Satan will have no power over us.

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 4:4 (NIV)

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:2-3 (NIV)

In Scripture, God gives us a basic understanding of Satan and his tactics. Again, we need to keep our focus on our Lord Jesus Christ, but it is wise to know the basics of what God has revealed to us about Satan. With the discernment of the Spirit of God, we can recognize the activity and tactics of Satan and resist him in the ways that God has instructed us.

...so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes. 2 Corinthians 2:11 (NASB)

Following are some fundamental truths about Satan that God has revealed to us in His Word:

A. Satan is a liar and he is evil.

Notice that in the following Scripture it states that there is no truth in Satan. Satan is a deceiver and will always misrepresent truth to accomplish his own evil purposes.

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

John 8:44 (ESV)

Satan is evil and he does not tell the truth. God is just the opposite. God is holy -- separated from all that is sinful or evil. God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God are all identified as truth. We can trust and have confidence in God and His Word. Praise the Lord!!!

B. Satan would like to destroy us.

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)

Satan wants to destroy life, but God gave His life for us so that we can have eternal life.

C. Satan tries to keep people from God.

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV)

Satan desperately tries to keep people from God. However, our Father draws us to Himself in love and compassion and He gives us blessings here on earth and He gives us eternal life with Him.

D. Deceiving people is one of Satan's most effective tactics.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 1 Timothy 4:1 (NASB)

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15a (ESV)

One of Satan's most effective forms of deception is to perform miracles and other signs.

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Matthew 7:22-23 (NIV)

Many who sincerely believe that they are serving God and even being led by His Spirit are going to be

shocked to find out that they have been deceived by the god of this age.

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 (ESV)

For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, Revelation 16:14a (KJV)

When we genuinely walk in fellowship with God and are searching the Word of God for genuine Biblical truth, and when we are taught by mature Godly teachers, we will not be deceived. The Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Word of God which is the Bible, are all identified as truth. The truth about God is revealed to us through the Word of God. The Spirit of God enables us to understand the Word of God. The truth does not deceive us.

E. How to have victory over Satan –

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. James 4:7-8 (KJV)

This is a verse of Scripture that is often misquoted or “underquoted”. You often hear it said that if we simply resist Satan, he will flee from us. What is left out is what is just before and what is just after this part of the verse. We resist Satan by submitting to God and coming near to Him. These simple phrases describe an entire lifestyle of submission, obedience, and walking close to our God.

A person who claims to resist Satan without a lifestyle of submitting to God and walking close to Him will be deceived by Satan. We may confidently believe that we are doing what is right, but, in reality, we are doing little or nothing that is bearing genuine spiritual fruit. When we attempt to resist the devil in our own strength, we are bound to fail.

Ephesians 6:10-18 is by far the most complete passage of Scripture teaching us how to defeat Satan. It may also be the most overlooked passage on defeating Satan. Every Christian needs to read and digest this passage. Read it several times and carefully think about what it says. Think about what parts of the armor you need to put on.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Ephesians 6:10-11 (NASB)

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, ... 1 Peter 5:8-9a (NIV)

In this verse we are taught that in our struggle with Satan we are to be self-controlled, alert, and to stand firm in the faith. In the following verse, we are told not to give Satan a foothold. Anger, pride, guilt, fear and many other kinds of sin and unbelief give the devil a foothold in our life. If Satan has a foothold, he will not be content until he is in control of every part of our life.

In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:26-27 (NIV)

When we pray “deliver us from the evil one”, it is far from a light frivolous prayer. It is a prayer of complete submission. It is a prayer that we will walk close to the Lord. It is a prayer of commitment to putting on the whole armor of God. It is a commitment to be alert and self-controlled. It is a commitment to stand firm in the faith. It is a commitment not to give the devil even the smallest foothold in our life.

When we are growing in the Lord with this kind of a commitment, we do not have to focus on Satan and what he can do. While we must remain alert as to what Satan desires to do, our focus must always be on our Lord Jesus Christ and enjoying our walk and fellowship with Him.

When we pray “*deliver us from the evil one*”, we
 ...ask for victory over Satan.
 ...pray that we will not be deceived by Satan.
 ...commit ourselves to walking close to God.
 ...commit ourselves to putting on the full armor of God.
 ...pray for understanding of the Word of God so that we will not believe any wrong teaching.
 ...pray that our fellow believers will not be deceived by Satan.

14. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

This prayer ends with a powerful victorious statement of praise for our Father who is the supreme sovereign Lord over all.

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. 1 Chronicles 29:11 (NIV)

When we pray “*Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever*”, we are giving Him praise and worship. We praise Him for what He has done in our life and in the lives of others. We praise and worship Him for who He is and what he has done for us and we praise and worship Him for what He is doing now.

Chapter Four

Praying for Fellow Believers

All who are genuine followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are members of the body of Christ -- the church. God did not design us to be spiritual hermits – we are to meet together. One key reason is so that we can build up and encourage each other in our walk with the Lord. One very important way we encourage and build up fellow believers is to pray for one another.

In the New Testament there are many examples of prayers for fellow believers. In this study guide we are going to look at the content of several of these prayers. These prayers are inspired by God and are examples given to us by God. By far the greatest majority of these prayers focus on the spiritual health of fellow believers. From them we learn much about how our Lord would have us to pray for each other.

Instructions to Pray for Fellow Believers

It is clear from the Word of God that we, as His followers, are to regularly pray for our fellow believers.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)

I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, ... 2 Timothy 1:3 (NASB)

...pray one for another, ... James 5:16 (KJV)

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;
1 Thessalonians 1:2 (KJV)

Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, ... 1 Samuel 12:23a (ESV)

We have seen from Matthew 6, in the “Lord’s Prayer”, that God is “our” Father. He is not just “my” Father; He is “our” Father. In the entire prayer there are no personal pronouns such as “I”, “me”, or “mine”. The word “our” indicates we are part of a family of believers.

Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.] Matthew 6:9-13 (NASB)

As part of a family of believers we pray for the needs and spiritual well-being of our whole family of believers. We pray that our brothers and sisters in the Lord will hallow God’s name; we pray that they will let God reign in their lives, and we pray that they will do the will of God. We also pray that their daily needs will be supplied. We pray that they will repent of sin and that they will live holy lives.

And we pray that they will be delivered from the evil one.

The Apostle Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament and who was used extensively by God to preach the gospel, knew the importance of prayer and earnestly and repeatedly asked fellow believers to pray for Him and his fellow workers.

I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Romans 15:30 (NIV)

...and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. Ephesians 6:19-20 (NASB)

Brethren, pray for us. 1 Thessalonians 5:25 (KJV)

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Colossians 4:2-4 (NIV)

Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 (NASB)

Biblical Examples of Praying for Fellow Believers

Praying for the spiritual well-being of fellow Christians is the heart and soul of essentially all of the prayers recorded in the New Testament. In many Christian circles we often pray for the physical health and protection of fellow Christians, but it seems as if we seldom pray for their spiritual health.

Carefully read each of the following Biblical prayers. Notice that all except for the last two focus on the spiritual health of fellow believers.

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 (NKJV)

Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; 2 Corinthians 13:7a (KJV)

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, ... Philemon 1:6a (NIV)

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. Colossians 4:12 (NIV)

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (NASB)

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Romans 10:1 (KJV)

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NASB)

And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. 2 Corinthians 13:9b (NKJV)

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 (NASB)

Often there is an intensity to their prayers.

...as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? 1 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV)

When Peter was put in prison, there was constant prayer for him by those in the church.

Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. Acts 12:5 (NKJV)

John prayed for the health and well-being of Gaius, his friend and fellow believer.

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. 3 John 1:2 (NIV)

These prayers very closely fit into the pattern for prayer given by our Lord in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. Studying these prayers will help us to effectively use the pattern of prayer given by our Lord Jesus Christ as we pray for our fellow believers. Following these examples of prayer would revolutionize the way most people pray and could very well lead to genuine long-lasting revival of godly living among God's people.

The Spirit of God inspired the Apostle Paul to write at least thirteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. In these books Paul included many of his prayers for fellow believers. The inclusion of these prayers in Scripture was not just an accident or an afterthought. God wanted us to learn from them.

Following is a closer look at six of Paul's prayers. As I studied these prayers, I was awed by their depth. I found myself struggling to put into words and explain what was being taught through these prayers. These prayers show the heart of Paul and his deep concern for fellow Christians.

These prayers get to the very heart of living Spirit-filled godly lives. I would encourage you to not hurry as you go through this section. Read each prayer several times and take time to think and meditate on each one. Let your own walk with the Lord and your own pattern of prayer be enriched.

In each of these prayers Paul not only tells us what he prayed, but he also states why he prayed as he

did. We are told what we can expect to happen as a result of each prayer. Carefully look at the prayer and at the expected results from each prayer.

1. Ephesians 3:14-19

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:14-19 (NASB)

The prayer (part 1): ...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,...

Here Paul prays that we will be strengthened with power through the Spirit of God in our inner being. He is not praying for a just a little power, but power according to the “*riches of His glory*”. That is a lot of power. It is not a human power but rather it is a God-given power that exalts the glory of God. This is a power that penetrates every part of our being or “inner man”. This is not a shallow or occasional experience; it is on-going control of every aspect of our lives.

In Isaiah 11:2, the Spirit of God is identified in several different ways, including His being the Spirit of power.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD, Isaiah 11:2 (NIV)

When we consistently allow the Spirit to fill or control us, we will have spiritual power. Many of us feel a lack of real genuine spiritual power in our lives. The answer to this is to deliberately choose to submit to the Lord by growing in our understanding of the Word of God and then putting it into practice. This is the heart of being filled with the Spirit and being strengthened with power.

Expected results from this prayer: ...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;

Being filled with the Spirit and living by faith go hand-in-hand. You cannot have one without the other. When we are strengthened with power by the Spirit, it results in a genuine faith in our Lord. We will live and walk by faith. Many would expect and claim much more “dramatic” results from being filled with the Spirit. However, living by faith and submitting in every part of our life is the heart of God’s will and purpose for every believer. This all comes from being “*strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man*”.

The prayer (part 2): ...and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge,

As God's people we are all rooted and grounded in the love of God. However, as humans, we do not always understand or fully appreciate this very important truth. This is especially true when we go through times of trials. Knowing how deeply God loves us enables us to be faithful when are facing these difficult times in our life.

Paul prays that we will "*comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth*" of God's love. This is a simple but profound prayer. The more we understand and appreciate how much God loves us, the better we will know Him and the closer our walk with Him will be.

The best way to grasp the breadth, the length, the height and the depth of God's love is remembering and think about the cross. Our holy God deeply suffered, became sin and died an agonizing death because He deeply loved us. Today our Father still expresses that same love for us who are His adopted children. This is a love that far surpasses anything we can experience on a purely human level.

This prayer ends with a statement that seems contradictory, "*to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge*". How can we know what cannot be known?

We can never know the love of God by intellectual knowledge alone. It will never enable us to fully know or understand the love of God. However, as we grow in our walk with God and develop a deeper commitment to being controlled by His Spirit and walking by faith, we grow in our understanding of the depth of His love in a way that goes far beyond intellectual knowledge alone. Again, the greater our understanding of the love of God, the closer our walk with Him.

Expected results from this prayer: ...that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

As we grow in our ability to understand the love of God and to live in that understanding, we will more fully become one with Him and participate in the nature of God and escape the corruption of the world. (2 Petet1:4) Our minds cannot grasp what it is to be filled to full measure with the fullness of God. However, it becomes a reality in our lives when we make the choice to believe in Him. We grow in our understanding and appreciation of this amazing truth as we let the Spirit of God illuminate and empower us and as we grow in our walk of faith.

In our prayers for fellow believers, let's pray that they will be "*strengthened with power through His Spirit in their inner being*", and that they "*may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge*".

2. *Philippians 1:9-11*

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:9-11 (ESV)

The prayer: **...that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,**

This was a prayer that the Philippians would abound in love. We are rooted and grounded in love; now we ourselves must abound in love. Not with just a little love but *abound* in love. It would be hard to overstate how important love is in our walk with God. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3,13) Without love, we are indeed nothing.

Notice that Paul prays that their love may abound more and more in “*knowledge and all discernment*”. The NIV says “*knowledge and depth of insight*”. Paul prays that their love would be grounded in knowledge. This is knowledge that comes from the Word of God. Our exercise of love is to be in accordance with Biblical principles. Unbiblical love is of little eternal value.

We must also use wisdom in the exercise of love. As humans, our resources are limited. Our physical resources are limited and our personal inner strength is limited. We must, under the leading of the Spirit of God, use wisdom and exercise our love in a Biblical way. As His followers we must be generous but wise and discerning in the exercise of love.

Our love is to be exercised with “*depth of insight*”. When our love is grounded in Biblical knowledge and insight, we will exercise our love in a Biblical manner and God will use our love to accomplish His will and purpose in the lives of those to whom we give love. An unbiblical love is not a product of the Spirit of God, and it will produce no spiritual fruit and it has no eternal value.

Expected results from this prayer:

**...so that you may approve what is excellent
 ...and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ
 ...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and
 praise of God ...**

When our love abounds in knowledge and depth of insight, tremendous things happen. First, we have discernment and are able to “approve what is excellent”. As we make good judgments in the exercise of our love, we are in tune with the goodness and moral excellence of God and we are pure and blameless. We will live righteous lives and, most of all, God will be praised and glorified.

It is hard to adequately teach what is being said here. How do we describe living a pure and blameless life for the rest of our life? How can we teach on being filled with the fruit of doing what is right? There is so much fruit of wrong living in the lives of both Christians and non-Christians that we hardly know what it is like to enjoy the fruit that is produced by living a godly life, and abounding in love.

The kind of maturity spoken of in these verses comes only as a result of our growing in our understanding of God’s love for us, and in turn we love others as He instructs us to love.

As we pray for fellow believers, let’s pray that they would abound more and more in Biblical love.

3. *Ephesians 1:16-19a*

I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Ephesians 1:16-19a (NIV)

The prayer (part 1): **God... ...may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation,**

Wisdom and revelation go together. Revelation has to do with truth that God reveals to man. Our record of God's revelation of truth is the Bible. In essence, when Paul prays they will have a spirit of revelation, he is praying that they will understand God's revelation of truth, the Bible. Wisdom is understanding how to put God's revealed truth into practice. Understanding of God's revealed truth plus wisdom is a powerful combination.

Understanding the Word and having wisdom go together. We cannot expect to have wisdom without understanding the Word. Gaining wisdom and understanding the Word is made possible by the Spirit of God who lives in us. The Spirit enables us to absorb the Word of God, and He gives wisdom as we grow in our understanding of the Word and put it into practice.

Expected results from this prayer: **...so that you may know him better.**

When we study the Word and put its truths into practice, we grow in our knowledge and understanding of God and we know Him better. That should be the strong desire of every Christian. The better we know Him, the closer we will walk with Him and the greater will be our submission to Him. The better we know Him, the more glory we bring Him and the more spiritual fruit we bear.

The prayer (part 2): **I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened**

This is a continuation of the first part of this prayer. As we absorb the Word and put it into practice, the Spirit of God illuminates us and the very "*eyes of our heart*" are enlightened. The "*eyes of our heart*" refers to our very inner being. It refers to who we really are, not just to what we may appear to be on the outside. This a deep level of understanding and enlightenment. It is a level of enlightenment that comes from a concentrated seeking to know Him better, and a deep desire to walk near to Him.

Expected results from this prayer:

...in order that you may know

...the hope to which he has called you,

...the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

...and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

As the “*eyes of our heart*” are enlightened, very good things will result. First, we will know the hope to which He has called us. In Scripture, our hope is identified as all that is ahead for us. The return of Christ, heaven, and all that goes with it, is our hope. Going right along with this, when the “*eyes of our heart*” are enlightened, we begin to understand the glorious inheritance God has waiting for us when we go to be with Him. It is a “*glorious*” inheritance. As we know Him better and better, the greater our excitement over what God has in store for us.

In Scripture, hope is an absolutely sure thing, not just a “hope so” future in heaven. We can endure trials here when we know for sure what is just ahead for us. What a hope we have!!!

The more that we know God deep in our soul and spirit, the greater our understanding of God’s power and the greater our appropriation of that power in our own life.

When we pray for fellow believers, be sure to pray that God will give them “*the spirit of wisdom and revelation*” and that the “*eyes of their heart will be enlightened*”.

4. 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 (NIV)

The prayer (part 1): **...that our God may count you worthy of his calling,**

When we are saved, we have the righteousness of God credited to us. We are worthy to be His simply because He makes us worthy. This is a prayer that we genuinely know God and that we will live in a manner that is worthy of our being called to God.

We recognize that no one is worthy of salvation and no one will ever be able to live in such a way as to be worthy of God’s blessings on our lives. Because He has made us worthy, we commit ourselves to living a righteous life.

The prayer (part 2): **...that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.**

This is an amazing prayer. When we seek to live a righteous life, our life, our goals, and our actions will all be in tune with the will and purposes of God. This puts us in a position to be used and blessed by God. This is a prayer that the power of God will fulfill every good purpose of our hearts as we walk in step with His own will and purpose. It is a prayer that God will fulfill the actions we take as a result of our faith in Him. God through His own power will fulfill what we purpose to do as a result of our faith in God. This is an amazing truth and a powerful motivation to walk close to Him and be confident that He will work through us when we take steps of faith.

Expected results from this prayer: We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

God responds and He is glorified when we take steps of faith. The most fundamental reason we exist is to glorify God and He is glorified when we take steps of faith.

There is a second amazing truth in this verse. Not only do we glorify God, but God glorifies us as we walk in Him and act in faith. Carefully read and think about the phrase “*our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him*”. (Also see John 17.) This is a little mind boggling. We must remember that any glory we receive is not a glory before man, but a glory in Christ. It is not just a little glory; it is a glory that is in accordance with the grace of God.

From this prayer we learn to pray that God will count our fellow believers worthy of their calling and that by His power He will fulfill every good purpose of theirs and every act prompted by their faith.

5. Romans 15:5-6

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5-6 (ESV)

The prayer: May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,

This is not a difficult prayer to understand. It is a simple prayer that there would be harmony and unity among the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though it is simple, it is profound. It is not only a prayer of Paul; it is also a prayer from the heart of the Lord Jesus Himself. The heart of Jesus’ prayer for us the evening before He was crucified (John 17) was that we would be one. According to Jesus’ prayer, when His followers are one, the world will know who Jesus is and they will believe.

The sad truth is that few genuine believers have a unified goal and purpose. We not only lack a unified purpose, there are often factions and dissensions among God’s people. There are many who claim to “love the Lord” and have a burden for the lost; yet by their actions, they hinder unity and even cause divisions and disharmony. This keeps people from coming to the Lord. In reality, their own selfish desires come before their commitment to the Lord.

Expected results from this prayer: ...so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When God’s people are unified, they are together in their spirits and in their speech. Their talk will show what is in their hearts. And together we bring glory to God. There is no higher calling or purpose than to glorify Him.

When we pray for fellow believers, we pray that there will be harmony and unity among us.

6. Colossians 1:9-12

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. Colossians 1:9-12 (NASB)

The prayer: ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

This is a prayer that we will have the wisdom and understanding to know and to do the will of God.

The vast majority of the will of God is revealed to us in the Word of God. The Word tells us how we are to act and what we are to do in essentially all areas of our life. Knowing the will of God comes as we are filled and controlled by the desire to understand His Word and put it into practice. Anyone who does not make understanding the Word of God a high priority will never be able to fully know or understand the will of God. When we know His will in a Biblical sense, we will do it. This is not just a prayer for head knowledge, but a prayer that we will both know and do God's will.

When we focus on putting the revealed will of God into practice, the things that are not known will fall into place. God will lead us in making important decisions such as "Who should I marry?", or "Where should I work?", or "Where should I live?" when we daily walk with Him in submission to the known will of God, which is already revealed to us in His Word.

To have knowledge and understanding of the will of God and the wisdom to put it into practice, we must regularly absorb the Word of God and be led by His Spirit. We must know and apply His Word. To ask for knowledge of the will of God is to commit ourselves to learning and absorbing the Word.

Praying for understanding of God's will is a prayer of complete submission. We cannot resist the Spirit of God and at the same time genuinely pray for knowledge of the will of God.

Expected results from this prayer:

Paul prayed this prayer so that they would...

**...walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,
 ...please Him in all respects,
 ...bear fruit in every good work
 ...increase in the knowledge of God;
 ...be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might,
 ...be steadfast and patient
 ...joyously give thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.**

This is an amazing list. Take time to digest what is being said here. All of these are the result of knowing and doing the will of God. When we know and do the will of God, we live worthy lives; we please Him; we bear fruit; we grow in our knowledge of God; we are strengthened with power; and we joyfully thank Him.

When we pray for fellow believers, we pray that they “*may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*”.

Conclusion

All of these things that the New Testament writers prayed for are the heart and soul of walking with God. Anyone who carefully reads these prayers will soon realize there is a huge difference in these prayers and the way most of us pray. If we wish to have power in prayer, we need to begin praying as Paul and the others prayed. What a difference it would make in our lives and in our churches if we would.

Following is a summary of the prayers for fellow believers covered in this study guide. They prayed that...

1. ...they would be set apart from the world, unto God.
2. ...their whole being -- spirit, soul, and body – would be blameless when Christ returns.
3. ...Jesus Himself would encourage and strengthen us.
4. ...their love would overflow for each other.
5. ...God would strengthen them so that they would be holy and blameless when Christ returns.
6. ...they would actively share their faith.
7. ...they would do nothing wrong.
8. ...they would be perfect or complete.
9. ...God would fill them with joy and peace.
10. ...their love would abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.
11. ... they would be filled with the fruit of righteousness.
12. ...God would strengthen them with power through His Spirit in their inner being.
13. ...they would be rooted and established in love.
14. ...they would have the power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.
15. ...God would give them wisdom.
16. ...the Spirit would enable them to understand God’s revealed Word.
17. ...that they would be enlightened.
18. ...they would be worthy of their calling.
19. ...by His power God would fulfill their every good purpose and every act prompted by their faith.
20. ...they would be unified.
21. ...they would know and do the will of God.

I hope that you were a little awed as I was as you looked at these Biblical examples of prayer for fellow believers. I can only encourage you to commit to praying for each other and to incorporating these prayers into your own prayers. God would be glorified and who knows how many lives and churches would be transformed.

Chapter Five

Praying for Individual Needs

So far in this study of prayer we have covered some very profound Biblical teaching on prayer. The prayer of Jesus in John 17 (Study Guide One) and the “Lord’s prayer” in Matthew 6 (Study Guide Two) are rich in depth and they teach us how to glorify Him in our prayer. Paul’s prayers for fellow Christians are also rich in depth and they take us to the very heart of living a godly life.

After going through these studies, one might wonder if it is okay to pray about the more ordinary daily needs of life. Is it okay to pray that our children will do well in school? Is it okay to pray that God will help me to get my car to run well? Is it okay to pray that God would bring someone to buy our house so we can move to Texas? Can we pray for wisdom in making the many decisions that we have to make every day?

The answer is “yes”. We can and should pray for things relating to our daily life. There is Biblical instruction that teaches us to pray about specific requests and there are many Biblical examples as well. And we can and should pray for wisdom in making the right decisions and choices that we must regularly make as we face these situations and needs in our life.

In this study guide we will go over Biblical instruction and examples of praying for more specific individual needs. Not only are we to pray for these needs, we are to pray with boldness and persistence. We will finish this study with a look at Jesus’ instructions to ask, to seek, and to knock.

Praying for Wisdom

A fundamental need for every Christian is wisdom in dealing with the many on-going needs and circumstances in life. We all daily make decisions and choices. Many of these are routine but others are not. All decisions, big or small, have at least some impact on our lives and on our walk with God. This is true of even the small routine decisions we make. We need God-given wisdom to regularly make good decisions that glorify God and promote a productive walk with our Lord.

In the Word of God, we are instructed to pray for wisdom.

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. James 1:5-6 (NASB)

Praying for Individual Needs

In the Lord’s prayer we are instructed to pray for our daily physical needs. When we pray “*give us today our daily bread*”, we pray that God will regularly supply our physical needs such as food, a home, clothing, health, and transportation. Even though we may have plenty, we still recognize God as our provider.

Give us this day our daily bread. Matthew 6:11 (KJV)

Throughout the Bible there are examples of prayer relating to different kinds of situations one faces in life. There are numerous Biblical examples of praying for specific needs.

Those who are in trouble should pray.

Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. James 5:13a (NIV)

Daniel and his three friends prayed that God would spare their lives.

...and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel 2:18 (ESV)

The early church prayed that Peter would be released from prison.

So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

Acts 12:5 (ESV)

Paul prayed that he would be able to come and minister in Rome.

...in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. Romans 1:10 (NIV)

Hannah, who was barren, prayed for a son.

She made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, ...

1 Samuel 1:11a (NASB)

Elisha prayed for safety when threatened by the Syrian army.

And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, ...

2 Kings 6:18a (ESV)

You can be sure that Jonah prayed when he was inside the stomach of a large fish.

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, Jonah 2:1 (NASB)

Jacob prayed for protection from his brother Esau.

Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. Genesis 32:11 (NIV)

Moses prayed that his sister Miriam would be healed.

So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "Please heal her, O God, I pray!"

Numbers 12:13 (NKJV)

This list could go on for several pages. The important thing to know and remember is that we can and should specifically pray about the various needs and situations that arise in our lives.

Two Parables Told by Jesus to Teach About Prayer

Both Luke 11 and Luke 18 record parables told by Jesus which teach about prayer. These are both very important to our understanding of Biblical prayer.

Then He (Jesus) said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' "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.

Luke 11:5-8 (NASB)

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. Luke 18:1-8 (NIV)

In the first parable (Luke 11) a man is in a predicament. It is midnight and he has had company arrive and he has nothing to feed them. Evidently, he was not expecting company. Remember, they had no telephones, cell phones, iPads, e-mail, or even snail mail to let his friend know that he was coming. There was no Motel 6's along the road where he could stop and spend the night; so he really had no choice but to stop at his friend's house for the rest of the night. They also did not have a McDonald's or a Kentucky Fried Chicken where the friend could stop and eat along the way. The visiting friend was probably hungry. In the Jewish culture of the time, it would have been the highest of insults to not give a visitor something to eat. However, the man had no food in the house to feed his visitor and since there were no Wal-Mart stores open all night long, this man had to make a quick trip over to a friend's house to borrow some food to feed his visitor.

When he knocked on his friend's door and asked for three small loaves of bread, his friend was annoyed. He and his family were all settled in bed, and the man did not want to get up, disturb his family, and unbolt the door, all to get three small loaves of bread. Instead of getting up to get the food, he said, "Don't bother me". Or in our language he might have said, "Get lost – It's late and I was already asleep and so is everybody else -- or at least they were asleep until you started banging on the door". In spite of the put off, the man who needed the bread kept knocking and asking. In fact, he

kept asking with “boldness” (NIV). Finally, the man in bed, realizing he didn’t have much choice, got up and gave his friend the bread he needed.

In the second parable (Luke 18) a woman who had been wronged, repeatedly goes to a judge asking that the situation be corrected. The unjust judge is annoyed by her continual requests and puts her off. Finally, because of her persistence he grants her request.

There are at least two important principles of prayer that we can learn from these parables.

1. The first principle is that God expects us to ask for specific needs in our life.

First, look at the request in the first parable. The request was not a profound request such as “hallowed be Your name”, or “Your kingdom come”, or “God grant me the boldness to witness”. Instead, it was a simple request for three small loaves of bread to feed an unexpected guest.

Also, notice that the widow in the second parable was not making a profound request. She had been wronged and was asking the judge to make it right.

Both of these requests were related to specific needs. As we have already seen, God instructs us to pray concerning our individual needs. These two parables told by Jesus Himself reinforce this teaching.

2. The second principle is that God wants us to be persistent in our prayer.

A second major principle is that we are to be persistent in prayer. Notice the last sentence in the first parable. (Luke 11) *“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”*. This specifically and clearly teaches that we are not to give up praying about a legitimate need in our life.

Jesus told the second parable (Luke 18) specifically to teach persistence in prayer. *“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up”*.

Again, look at the conclusion of this parable. The unjust judge states, *“Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!”* And the Lord said, *“Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you; He will see that they get justice, and quickly”*.

Both of these parables are unique in Scripture. In other parables that Jesus told, He would say something like “The kingdom of heaven is like...”, but in these two parables Jesus uses examples that are not “like” Him but rather they are “unlike” Him. In both of these parables Jesus was saying that if these unwilling men granted the request of those who asked with persistence and boldness, then how much more will our Father, who deeply loves us and is eager to answer our prayers, grant our requests.

There are numerous other Biblical examples of persistent prayer. Notice that in the following verse the church was in “constant prayer”:

Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. Acts 12:5 (NKJV)

Thus I fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, as I fell down at the first; because the Lord had said he would destroy you. I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, Deuteronomy 9:25-26a (KJV)

As she continued praying before the Lord... 1 Samuel 1:12a (ESV)

In Genesis 32:24-30, Jacob wrestled “with God”. Jacob refused to let Him go until God blessed him. We, as Christians, need to have this same kind of persistence in our prayer.

Praying With Boldness and Confidence

We do not have to be timid in our prayers. Instead, we can pray with confidence and boldness.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16 (KJV)

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. Ephesians 3:12 (NIV)

In the parable in Luke 11, in the NIV it says, *“I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.”* Luke 11:8 (NIV)

We, too, based on the promises of God, when our motives are right, can come with confidence and boldness and expect God to hear and answer our prayers.

God instructs us to be consistent and to be bold in praying. This is a growing process and in that process of growing there will likely be times of frustration. At times it seems as if God simply is not hearing our prayer. When these times of frustration come, our faith may be tested and we may even wonder if God really hears or cares.

When these times of frustration come, it may be helpful to know that you are not alone. King David was identified in Scripture as a “man after God’s own heart”. Yet, David also experienced these times of deep frustration with God.

In the book of Psalms there are some expressions of dismay and frustration because God is seemingly not responding to prayers for help. Notice the tone of the following psalms. In some of these, there is deep frustration and David is asking, even demanding, that God hear and answer his prayer.

Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide in times of trouble? Psalm 10:1 (NKJV)

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? Psalm 13:1 (ESV)

The following prayer of David is a prayer of desperation.

O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am faint; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long? Psalm 6:1-3 (NIV)

At times David, in his desperation, states that even his life may be in danger if God does not quickly answer and intervene.

To you, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. Psalm 28:1-2 (ESV)

Answer me quickly, O Lord! My spirit fails! Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit. Psalm 143:7 (ESV)

David defends his prayer and his motive for praying. He states that his prayer is a righteous prayer and he is not being deceitful, so therefore God should listen to what he (David) was asking!

Hear, O LORD, my righteous plea; listen to my cry. Give ear to my prayer -- it does not rise from deceitful lips. Psalm 17:1 (NIV)

There are times that there are hints of anger in these times of frustration. In this next verse, the writer is telling God to wake up. “Rouse yourself!” Why are you sleeping and ignoring my misery?

Awake, O Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever. Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression? Psalm 44:23-24 (NIV)

In Psalm 102, the writer is even bolder yet. He not only asks God to listen; he also tells God to “stop hiding when I pray and answer me now”.

Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily. Psalm 102:1-2 (KJV)

Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught... Psalm 55:1-2 (NIV)

This kind of praying and frustration is not limited to the Psalms.

Though I cry, ‘I’ve been wronged!’ I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice. Job 19:7 (NIV)

O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? Habakkuk 1:2 (ESV)

Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful habitation. Where are your zeal and your might? The stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me. Isaiah 63:15 (ESV)

I cry out to You for help, but You do not answer me; I stand up, and You turn Your attention against me. Job 30:20 (NASB)

In some of these prayers there is a frustration and boldness that just doesn't seem right. However, God does not reject these prayers. In fact, He inspired these prayers. He included them in His Word for us to learn and be motivated by them. While we may feel uneasy about praying like this, we are instructed to boldly approach God and expect God to answer our prayers. I do not believe God is offended when we express our frustration to Him in prayer.

When we are discouraged, it can be helpful to remember some of the fundamental Biblical truths.

- a. Remember how deeply God loves us. He loves us more than we can begin to grasp or understand.
- b. Remember that God has all wisdom.
- c. Remember that God will do what is best for us.
- d. Remember that God will glorify Himself through the difficult times in our lives.
- e. Remember that faithfulness in difficult times causes our faith to grow.
- f. Remember that both Jesus and the Spirit of God are interceding in prayer for us.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. Romans 8:26-27 (NIV)

When you face discouragement, even frustration with God, even when you don't feel like it, be faithful and do not lose heart. Even though the following verses do not mention prayer, they are excellent verses to follow, even when you are feeling deeply frustrated.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:1-3 (NASB)

Asking, Seeking, and Knocking

In Luke 11, after Jesus tells the parable about prayer in verses 5-8, He continues His teaching on prayer.

So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Luke 11:9-10 (NKJV)

These verses center around three words: ask, seek and knock. *The tense of the verbs indicate that we are to keep on asking, keep on seeking, and to keep on knocking.* When we keep on asking, it will be given to us. When we keep on seeking, we will find, and when we keep on knocking, the door will be opened.

There is a progression in these three words. Seeking goes beyond simply asking and knocking goes

further than asking and seeking. These verses teach us that we need follow up our prayers with action.

Nehemiah prayed and then followed through by approaching the king with his request. God made the king's heart receptive to Nehemiah's request. If Nehemiah had prayed but taken no action, the prayer would have remained unanswered. Later, Nehemiah prayed for protection from the enemy and then he organized the people to fight, if needed. However, the enemy never attacked. If Nehemiah had prayed but never organized a defense against the enemy, the enemy could have attacked and the whole cause could have been lost.

When we ask, we also seek. If a person is praying for a job, he should go out and look for a job. If a person is asking for God to make him a more loving person, he should look for ways to express Christian love. If a person is asking for help in losing weight, he should stay away from the kitchen and from fast food restaurants.

Knocking is a step beyond seeking. If we are looking for direction from the Lord, we knock on a door to see if God will open it. If He does, then we proceed in that direction. We continue in that direction unless the Lord shows us in one way or another that that is not the right way. If the Lord does not open a door, then we knock on a different door. The point is, when we pray we also take appropriate action and we are persistent.

There are times when we cannot take any action about a particular request. When that is the case, we continue to pray until we see God's answer.

Now Jesus assures us that He will answer our prayer with what is good.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 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!" Luke 11:11-13 (NIV)

What Jesus is teaching here is not difficult to understand. If we, as human fathers, know how to give good things to our children, how much more will our loving Father give good things to us when we ask. If God loved us enough to give us Himself, through His own Spirit, is there anything good that He would withhold from us?

So far in our study of prayer we have seen some very important Biblical teaching. We have looked at how Jesus himself prayed and how He instructs us to pray. We have looked at how the Apostle Paul and others prayed for fellow believers, and now we have looked at teaching related to praying for our own individual needs. All of these are important. Now each of us needs to put effort into developing these Biblical patterns of prayer. We need to follow these instructions and learn from the Biblical examples given. As we do, our individual lives and our churches will be immensely enriched and we will be productive and fruitful as we grow in our walk with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter Six

Fundamental Biblical Teaching About Prayer

Prayer is a major theme throughout the Bible. There are well over one thousand references to prayer in the Word of God. Prayer permeates the Bible. Throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, there is much we can learn about prayer.

In this chapter we will look at some fundamental Biblical truths' relation to prayer. In this chapter we will not look at specific aspects of prayer as we have in the previous study guides, but rather we will look at overall Biblical teaching relating to prayer.

There is a lot covered in this study guide. Take your time and work through this study. If you absorb and apply these truths, you may be thrilled at what will happen as you continue to develop healthy Biblical patterns of prayer.

1. Throughout the Bible, God's people regularly prayed.

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42 (NASB)

God used people who prayed. Nehemiah and Ezra are excellent examples. God used Nehemiah to lead the rebuilding of the city wall and gates, but, in an even greater way, God used both Nehemiah and Ezra to lead His people in one of the greatest spiritual revivals of all time. As you read about Nehemiah and Ezra, it is clear that both of these men were men of prayer.

Throughout the Bible, people who were used by God devoted themselves to prayer. Some were prominent Biblical characters and others were not. Moses, Hannah, Samuel, David, Daniel, Anna, Paul, Peter and others are all examples of people who were used by God, and they all devoted themselves to prayer.

Samson was a man who was called and equipped by God to do a special service for the Lord. Few people have been equipped by God for service as Sampson was. Before his birth, Sampson was called to lead the deliverance of the Israelite people from bondage to the Philistines. The Spirit of God used Sampson in some powerful and unusual ways. Yet, in spite of all this, Samson spent most of his life going his own way. He was sensual and impulsive. His actions were often motivated by his desire for personal revenge. Throughout his life there are only two references to Samson praying and both times his prayers were self-centered selfish prayers. Samson was not a man of prayer and Samson failed to do what God called and equipped him to do. When he died, the Israelites were still in bondage to the Philistines.

In the book of Acts, the apostles would not let themselves become so busy that they would be drawn away from their ministry of prayer and the Word.

Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Acts 6:3-4 (ESV)

2. *Jesus set an example of prayer.*

So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed. Luke 5:16 (NKJV)

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Mark 1:35 (NIV)

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. Luke 6:12 (KJV)

Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, Matthew 19:13a (NKJV)

And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." Matthew 26:39 (NASB)

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Hebrews 5:7 (NIV)

Jesus regularly prayed. This certainly should impress on us our own need to pray since even Jesus Himself needed to regularly pray. He set an example of prayer for us to follow.

3. *Jesus continues to intercede for us today.*

From John 17 we learned that Jesus prayed for His disciples. He prayed for them as a group but He also prayed for them individually.

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. Luke 22:31-32 (NASB)

An encouraging and amazing truth is that Jesus is still praying and interceding for each of us today. We are all the more secure because Jesus continually prays and intercedes for us.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 1 John 2:1 (NIV)

Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised— who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Romans 8:34b (ESV)

Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25 (NASB)

When we get discouraged or feel that we are inadequate, remember that Jesus is praying and interceding for us.

4. *The Holy Spirit also intercedes for us in prayer.*

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. Romans 8:26-27 (NIV)

We are not given many details of the intercession of the Spirit on our behalf; however, from what we are told, this is a very precious truth. There are times when we want God to act but we simply don't know how we should pray. Or perhaps we are deeply hurting and it is difficult for our hurting spirit to put our prayer into words. Because we are weak, the Spirit intercedes in prayer for us with deep love and compassion that goes beyond our own human limitations. It is as if God so values our prayers that, through His own Holy Spirit, He steps in and does the praying for us.

The Spirit intercedes for us according to the will of God. This is a prayer that we can count on being answered. God will always answer the prayer of His own Holy Spirit as the Spirit intercedes on our behalf.

It is a tremendous truth that both Jesus and the Holy Spirit intercede and pray for us. That should be a huge encouragement to us. How can we fail? We have all three members of the trinity on our side and we are assured of victory.

5. *God is pleased when His people pray, and He hears their prayers.*

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, ...
1 Peter 3:12a (NIV)

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight. Proverbs 15:8 (KJV)

You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,
Psalm 10:17 (NIV)

And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious.
Exodus 22:27b (NASB)

The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer.
Psalm 6:9 (KJV)

Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.
Isaiah 65:24 (ESV)

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know. Jeremiah 33:3 (NKJV)

But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.
Psalm 4:3 (ESV)

We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.

Daniel 9:18b (NIV)

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16 (KJV)

Our prayers are not burdensome or an inconvenience to God. He loves it when His people pray, and He is anxious to hear and answer their prayers.

For most Christians, prayer is sporadic and limited. Few Christians set aside significant time each day for a time of Bible reading and prayer. This contributes to a shallow relationship with our Lord. We feel dry spiritually and we see little spiritual fruit in our lives. Sadly, this seems to be just as true for many pastors and other leaders as it is for ordinary Christians.

Developing good patterns of prayer and Bible reading requires a daily commitment of time and a commitment to draw closer to God. This takes time. Don't expect it to happen in a few minutes a day.

6. God instructs His people to continually pray.

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. Luke 18:1 (NIV)

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (KJV)

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;
Colossians 4:2 (NASB)

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Romans 12:12 (ESV)

These verses do not teach that we should be on our knees praying throughout every day. However, it is teaching that there should be on-going communication with our Lord. We can be consistently aware of His presence, and we can consistently be in touch with Him from the thoughts of our hearts.

As Psalm 139 teaches, God is with us at all times. To continually pray is to be aware of the presence of the Lord and to communicate with Him in our heart and thoughts throughout the day.

Nehemiah is a man who was busy and worked hard, but he still prayed regularly. Throughout the book, Nehemiah prays short quick prayers that show that God was never far away from his mind.

7. Praying in the Spirit

In the Word of God we are instructed to be continually controlled or filled with the Spirit. We are also instructed not to resist or grieve the Spirit.

...be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 (ESV)

The tense of the verb “be” in this passage indicates an on-going continual process. We are to continually be being filled with the Spirit. This is a command for us to be continually obedient to God. I may be submissive to God today but then allow resentment and rebellion to come in tomorrow. To be continually filled with the Spirit, one must continually submit and be obedient. It is to continually let the Word of God richly indwell us and guide all our decisions and our actions.

There is nothing magical or mysterious about being filled with the Spirit. It is simply living moment by moment, being conscious of God’s presence, and living and making all choices or decisions in tune with the instructions given in His Word – the Bible. We seek to be obedient and to glorify Him in every part of our life.

Being filled or controlled by the Spirit is an on-going way of life. We walk by faith in God and in His Word, letting Him guide every part of our life. The Spirit is not a sideline in our life -- He is the very heart and soul of our whole being. We must actively seek to bring every aspect of our lives into harmony with the Word of God. If we hold back anything in any part of our lives, we are hindering and resisting the Spirit of God.

We are also instructed to “*pray in the Holy Spirit*”.

But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.
Jude 1:20 (NIV)

Praying in the Spirit is part of an overall way of life that is lived in submission to the leading of the Spirit of God. One who is continually led by the Spirit will be led by the Spirit to pray. This is a key to productive prayer. Self-generated or selfish prayers will result in no genuine spiritual fruit.

It should be clearly understood that praying in the Spirit has nothing to do with “speaking in tongues”.

Ephesians 6:10-18 is a primary Biblical passage giving instruction in how to combat Satan. This important passage of Scripture concludes with the following verse:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)

Without question, Spirit-led prayer is a key in having victory over Satan. If we commit ourselves to developing Biblical patterns of prayer, Satan will fight us and do all he can to discourage us. To defeat Satan, draw close to God through absorbing His Word and putting it into practice, and through a Biblical pattern of prayer. With these in place, we have victory over Satan.

8. Prayer is powerful and effective. We can pray with confidence.

The prayer of a righteous Spirit-led person is powerful and effective.

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16b (NIV)
Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. Jeremiah 33:3 (KJV)

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16 (KJV)

In him (Jesus) and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. Ephesians 3:12 (NIV)

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, Ephesians 3:20 (KJV)

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Isaiah 58:6 (KJV)

9. One reason we do not see answered prayer and spiritual fruit is simply because we do not ask.

You do not have because you do not ask. James 4:2b (NASB)

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. Jeremiah 33:3 (KJV)

Many a church and many individuals have wondered why God does not seem to bless. We actively serve Him in various ways, but there just doesn't seem to be much fruit. Many a Sunday School teacher has wondered why there are so few in his class and why those in class do not seem to respond. One reason might be that they simply do not pray regularly, asking for His blessing.

10. Often in Scripture, individuals prayed with passion and with deep feeling.

Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, ... Romans 15:30 (NKJV)

In many Biblical prayers they expressed a deep desire to know and to fellowship with God.

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? Psalm 42:1-2 (NASB)

Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Psalm 61:1-2 (KJV)

My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Psalm 84:2 (NIV)

I stretch out my hands to You; My soul longs for You, as a parched land. Psalm 143:6 (NASB)

I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. Psalm 116:1-2 (ESV)

There are numerous Scriptural examples of individuals who passionately brought deeply felt requests to God in prayer.

Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free.

Psalm 118:5 (ESV)

In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. 1 Samuel 1:10 (NIV)

I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief. 1 Samuel 1:16b (NIV)

...yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. Proverbs 2:3-5 (ESV)

So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. Daniel 9:3 (NIV)

Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly. Ezra 10:1 (NASB)

And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes. Esther 4:3 (ESV)

When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. Nehemiah 1:4 (NASB)

Jesus Himself prayed with intense feeling.

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Hebrews 5:7 (NIV)

In Scripture, the word “cry” is often used when people prayed. Crying is an indication of deep feeling. We need to learn to pray with passion. Most of the time it is only in unusual or emergency situations that we pray with any real feeling. Often our prayers, including the prayers of this writer, are casual without much real feeling or intensity. We don't know what it is like to pray with genuine passion. There don't seem to be any spiritual issues that burden our hearts and drive us to prayer. There is little or nothing that deeply motivates us to pray with intensity.

I do not know what it will take to motivate us to pray with passion and intensity; however, I am sure that if we choose to develop our prayer life and if we begin to ask God to give us a passion to pray, that He will begin to answer that prayer as we consistently pray. Choose a spiritual cause that will motivate you to pray with passion. It would be exciting and eternally rewarding to see what God would do in response to our deeply felt prayers.

Passion in prayer cannot be self-generated; it must come from the heart of God Himself. As we draw close to God, we will begin to feel the heart of God and we will begin to pray with passion. Lack of a

passion to pray is an indication that our heart is cool and we are not walking in step with the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.
Revelation 3:15-16 (NIV)

In order for us to have a passion to pray, we will have to rise above the level of mediocre Christianity that saturates much of the church today. In many cases we may feel alone in our pursuit of God and in our pursuit of godly prayer. However, seeking God with all our hearts and glorifying Him are the most important reasons we exist and these must take priority over everything else in our life.

11. There was often fasting and praying in important or crisis situations.

And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,... Nehemiah 1:4 (KJV)

In each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes. Esther 4:3 (NASB)

Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions.
Ezra 8:21 (NASB)

While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13:2-3 (NASB)

And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Acts 14:23 (ESV)

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Isaiah 58:6 (NIV)

12. Key Topics in Biblical Prayer

Scriptural prayer covers many different topics. No topic is off limits as long as we desire to do what honors our Lord Jesus Christ. The topics for prayer in this section of our study is certainly not a complete list. The kinds of things we can and should pray about are essentially unlimited.

There are some topics that are absolutely essential if we are to walk with Him in the way He asks. Following are some of these topics:

A. Confession of Sin

Christians need to regularly confess sin. Unconfessed sin hinders our prayers and hinders the Spirit of God from working in our life.

In 1 John 1:9, “confess” is in the present tense. It is an on-going action. That simply means that Christians are to regularly confess sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:8-10 (KJV)

Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. Luke 11:4a (NIV)

Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. Psalm 24:3-4 (KJV)

The book of 1 John was written to believers. This is clear as one goes through the book. Christians are to confess sin as instructed in 1 John 1:8-10, not for salvation, but to keep sin from interfering with our joy, our fellowship, and our productivity as a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. Regularly genuinely confessing sin allows the Spirit of God to have free reign in our lives and we can have spiritual power and wisdom.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Psalm 51:1-3 (KJV)

I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. Daniel 9:4-5 (NASB)

I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. Nehemiah 1:6b-7 (NIV)

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV)

Every Christian who desires to walk with God must regularly examine himself and confess any sin that is coming between him and God. If a person is unwilling to confess known sin, he is rebelling against God. Unconfessed sin will hinder the work of the Spirit of God and it will keep us from effective Biblical prayer. Unconfessed sin hinders growth and leads to stagnation in our walk with God.

B. Praise and Thanksgiving

Praise and thanksgiving are the very heart and soul of many Biblical prayers.

I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: 2 Samuel 22:4 (KJV)

Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations. Psalm 100:4-5 (NASB)

Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. 1 Chronicles 29:13 (KJV)

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Psalm 103:1 (NIV)

In many Scriptural prayers they praised God by remembering and recounting what God had done for His people in the past. Some of these are long prayers that are often skipped over as we read the Word. However, when we skip over these prayers, we miss out on learning a kind of prayer that God loved.

These prayers are too long to reproduce in this study guide, but here are some passages with this kind of praying. **Nehemiah 9:5-37, Daniel 9:4-19, Psalm 78:1-72, Psalm 105, Psalm 106, and 1 Kings 8:22-53.** It would be well for us to read and then use this kind of a prayer to thank and to praise God.

C. For Spiritual Understanding and Growth

Let my cry come before You, O LORD; Give me understanding according to Your word.
Psalm 119:169 (NKJV)

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Psalm 119:18 (KJV)

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV)

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, ... James 1:5a (KJV)

...and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. Proverbs 2:3-5 (NIV)

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 (NIV)

D. For Effective Service to the Lord

And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message ,... Pray that I may proclaim it

clearly, as I should. Colossians 4:3a-4 (NIV)

...as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? 1 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV)

But now, O God, strengthen my hands. Nehemiah 6:9b (ESV)

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Philemon 1:6 (NIV)

Serving the Lord is fundamental in our walk with God. Service that comes from our own desires and done in our own strength will have little or no lasting value. However, when we serve under the leading and the power of the Spirit of God, there is spiritual fruit. God will use our service to accomplish His own will and purpose. This kind of service needs to be bathed in prayer.

E. For the Lost

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.
Romans 10:1 (KJV)

Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."
Matthew 9:38 (NIV)

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Matthew 9:37-38 (ESV)

God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. Again, this is something that cannot be done in our own strength. For it to be genuine, the Spirit of God must be at work. Through prayer and commitment we can be good witnesses for our Lord Jesus Christ.

F. For Good Health

God cares about our health. We should ask for good health and then follow up by living a lifestyle that promotes good health.

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health... 3 John 2a (NIV)

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him,
James 5:14a (KJV)

Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "O God, heal her, I pray!" Numbers 12:13 (NASB)

G. For Help In Times of Trouble

Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray... James 5:13a (NIV)

This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

Psalm 34:6 (KJV)

From inside the fish Jonah prayed... Jonah 2:1a (NIV)

Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help. Psalm 31:22b (NIV)

In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me. Psalm 86:7 (ESV)

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. Psalm 91:15 (KJV)

When he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate. Exodus 22:27b (NIV)

But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Matthew 14:30 (NASB)

Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.

Psalm 107:6 (KJV)

H. For Protection

And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, ... 2 Thessalonians 3:2a (NIV)

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; protect me from those who rise up against me; deliver me from those who work evil, and save me from bloodthirsty men. Psalm 59:1-2 (ESV)

Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD; may your love and your truth always protect me.

Psalm 40:11 (NIV)

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. John 17:11 (NIV)

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

John 17:15 (ESV)

I. For Fellow Christians

A major part of the prayers in the New Testament are for our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Study Guide Three of this prayer study is given entirely to this topic. If you have not studied that chapter, you need to go back and digest that chapter. It is a very important part of a Biblical pattern of prayer.

13. *God promises positive answers to prayer when basic conditions are met.*

A. When we live obedient righteous lives

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16b (NIV)

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. 1 John 3:21-22 (NKJV)

Every Christian has had God's righteousness credited to his account. Now we are to live righteous lives. "Righteous" in the context of James 5:16 is speaking of practical righteousness – how we live our lives. The prayer of a person who is living right before God is powerful and effective.

...for they cried out to God in the battle, and He answered their prayers because they trusted in Him. 1 Chronicles 5:20b (NASB)

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7:14 (KJV)

He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.
Psalm 145:19 (NIV)

Yet even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; Joel 2:12 (ESV)

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
Matthew 5:6 (KJV)

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.
Psalm 37:4 (KJV)

Christians cannot expect to hold on to any sin and rebellion and still expect God to answer our prayer. To have an effective productive prayer life, we must be committed to walking close and in step with our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. When we ask in accordance with His will

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us -- whatever we ask -- we know that we have what we asked of him. 1 John 5:14-15 (NIV)

The Word of God reveals the will of God. When we regularly live in submission to the Word of God and follow the leading of the Spirit of God, we can be assured that we are doing the will of God. When we allow the Word and the Spirit to control us, our prayers will be in tune with the will of God. This assures us of positive answers to our prayers.

In the Word of God there are not detailed commands that cover every possible situation in life. In these situations, we determine from Biblical principles what would please God. If we are honest with God and ourselves, there will be very few situations in life in which we cannot determine what would please Him. If we want our prayers answered, we will choose to do His will or what pleases Him.

When we pray, it should always be our desire that God would have His way in our life. In the pattern for prayer given to us by Jesus, we are instructed to pray, ...

...your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10b (ESV)

And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." Mark 14:36 (NASB)

These first two requirements for answered prayer are, in many ways, the same thing. When we live godly lives, we will pray in accordance with the will of God. These two requirements are really a summary of all the conditions for answered prayer. There are not really five or six different requirements, just this one -- that we walk close to Him and ask according to His will.

C. When we remain in the Word of God

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. John 15:7 (NIV)

If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination. Proverbs 28:9 (ESV)

The Word of God explains the will of God. The Word of God tells us how to live a righteous life. When we remain in the Word of God and let it determine how we live, we will know and we will do the will of God and we will pray in accordance with the will of God. This is what results in answered prayer.

D. When we pray in Jesus' name

And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. John 14:13-14 (NKJV)

You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. John 15:16 (NASB)

It is Jesus who died for us and who credits us with righteous. Because of Him we can pray, coming to God in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus always acts in accordance with the will and purpose of God. Prayers that are genuinely offered in Jesus' name are the prayers that are in tune with the will and purpose of God. When we know and do the will of God and are praying in accordance with His will, we are praying in the name and authority of Jesus. We know that God will answer the prayer of His own Son, Jesus, and He will answer our prayers when we genuinely come in Jesus' name.

E. When we pray without doubt

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Hebrews 11:6 (NASB)

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mark 11:24 (NIV)

And Jesus answered them, “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.” Matthew 21:21-22 (ESV)

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. James 1:6 (ESV)

...for they cried out to God in the battle, and He answered their prayers because they trusted in Him. 1 Chronicles 5:20b (NASB)

When we live righteous lives and pray in the will of God, we can pray with confidence. We know that God will accomplish His own will and purpose. God promises positive answers, and He wants us to pray with confidence. When we pray with faith according to His will, we know that He will answer.

Many a Christian has tried in his own strength to conjure up enough faith so that he could get his prayers answered. If we listen to what we hear from most TV and radio “preachers” or “healers”, this is what we must do. However, answered prayer does not depend on the amount of faith that we can drum up, but instead it depends on putting our faith in a correctly understood God. *The way to greater faith is not to superficially try to drum up more faith from within ourselves, but to develop a sound Biblical understanding of who God is, to deepen our walk with Him, and to put our faith in Him and the promises He gives in His Word.*

There are no shortcuts. We cannot ignore God, and then somehow expect to have the faith for answered prayer. There may be times that God chooses to answer a prayer, even when we lack genuine Biblical faith; however, we cannot expect on-going answers to prayers when we do not choose to grow in our understanding and walk with Him.

F. When we seek Him with all our heart

Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:12-13 (NASB)

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. Proverbs 2:1-6 (NIV)

Knowing the Word of God and living in accordance with His will is not a half-hearted pursuit. We seek with all our hearts to know Him and to do His will.

G. When we follow our prayers with action

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8 (ESV)

...then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, ... Nehemiah 2:4b-5 (NIV)

And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night. Nehemiah 4:9 (ESV)

...and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. Proverbs 2:3-5 (NIV)

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Matthew 6:12 (KJV)

When we pray within the will of God, we also take appropriate action, expecting God to move in answer to our prayer.

Nehemiah prayed and then he approached the king with his request. God made the king's heart receptive to Nehemiah's request. If Nehemiah had prayed but taken no action, the prayer would have remained unanswered. Later, Nehemiah prayed for protection from the enemy and then he organized the people to fight, if needed. However, the enemy never attacked. If Nehemiah had prayed but never organized a defense against the enemy, then the enemy could have attacked and the whole cause could have been lost.

H. When we care for the poor

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' Isaiah 58:6-9 (ESV)

If we are unwilling to help those in need, we cannot expect our prayers to be answered.

14. What keeps God from answering prayer?

There are things that keep God from answering prayer.

Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: Proverbs 1:28 (KJV)

So do not pray for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them; do not plead with Me, for I will not listen to you. Jeremiah 7:16 (NIV)

Many of the things that keep God from answering prayer are simply the opposites of the things covered in the previous section on what brings positive answers to prayer. Some of the things that keep God from answering our prayers are as follows:

A. Sin

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. Isaiah 59:1-2 (KJV)

If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear; Psalm 66:18 (NASB)

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. Mark 11:25 (NKJV)

He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion. Proverbs 28:13 (NASB)

Having sin in our lives is the opposite of living a righteous life. Living a righteous life brings God's blessing and answered prayer. Having unconfessed sin leads to unanswered prayer.

B. When our motives are wrong

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4:3 (NIV)

Doing the will of God results in answered prayer and glory to God. When we seek our own selfish interests, God cannot answer our prayers. The focus of the Christian life is to glorify God, not ourselves. We are to do His will, not our own. When we pray for selfish reasons, we should not expect God to answer.

This does not mean that we should not pray for our own personal needs. We can and should pray for ourselves and our own needs. Just be sure we are committed to doing God's will and to glorifying Him with all that He gives us.

C. When our worship and service are not genuine

Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations -- I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your

appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you, even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Isaiah 1:13-15a (NIV)

These Scriptures are quite clear. When we do not live righteous lives, our worship is insincere and God is grieved and angry. This certainly does not result in answered prayer.

Ezekiel 8:16-18 and Isaiah 58:1-9 are similar passages. They are well worth reading.

D. When husbands do not treat their wives with respect (Also when wives do not treat their husbands with respect)

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:7 (ESV)

Being inconsiderate and disrespecting our wife will result in hindered prayer. Someone who disobeys God's instructions cannot expect positive answers to prayer.

E. Stinginess

Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered. Proverbs 21:13 (ESV)

This verse from the Old Testament is in tune with a fundamental Biblical principle. God is not pleased and will not answer the prayer of a selfish person who does not respond to the request of those who are in need.

If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. Deuteronomy 15:7-8 (NASB)

Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. Psalm 82:3-4 (NIV)

15. God's timetable is not the same as ours. Sometimes we must wait.

Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD. Psalm 27:14 (NIV)

But for you, O Lord, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. Psalm 38:15 (ESV)

I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. Psalm 40:1 (NIV)

In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation. Psalm 5:3 (NIV)

Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. Genesis 21:1-2 (NASB)

But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me. Micah 7:7 (NIV)

One thing we soon learn in our Christian life is that God often does not answer as quickly as we would like. This does not mean God is not answering; it means that God, in His wisdom, knows what is best and He is working to accomplish His own will and purpose. Sometimes that means that we may not see immediate answers to our prayers.

16. In the Bible there are times when God's people could not understand why God did not seem to answer their prayers. At times, they became deeply discouraged.

O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? Habakkuk 1:2 (ESV)

Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful habitation. Where are your zeal and your might? The stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me. Isaiah 63:15 (ESV)

Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice. Job 19:7 (NIV)

I cry out to You for help, but You do not answer me; I stand up, and You turn Your attention against me. Job 30:20 (NASB)

Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide in times of trouble? Psalm 10:1 (NKJV)

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? Psalm 13:1 (ESV)

O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am faint; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long? Psalm 6:1-3 (NIV)

To you, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary. Psalm 28:1-2 (ESV)

Answer me quickly, O Lord! My spirit fails! Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit. Psalm 143:7 (ESV)

Our feelings and emotions can vary from day to day. We do not always feel like praying, and we, as humans, can get discouraged when things just don't seem to make sense. Sometimes we can even begin to despair when we do not see God answer. In these times, we need to get into the Word and let it encourage our hearts. We also need to continue praying and expressing our thoughts to God, even if

our faith is wavering. God understands the frustrations of our heart and He will not condemn us for coming to Him, even when we are discouraged and our faith is wavering.

We will never understand all there is to know about God and why He does what He does. However, through faith in Him and His Word we know that God is working and enabling us to walk ever closer to Him.

When we are discouraged, it can be helpful to remember some of the fundamental Biblical truths.

- A. Remember how deeply God loves us. He loves us more than we can begin to grasp or understand.
- B. Remember that God has all wisdom.
- C. Remember that God will do what is best for us.
- D. Remember that God will glorify Himself through the difficult times in our lives.
- E. Remember that faithfulness in difficult times causes our faith to grow.
- F. Remember that both Jesus and the Spirit of God are interceding in prayer for us.

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27 (NASB)

17. When individuals prayed, they often reminded God of His promises.

Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. But you have said, "I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted."

Genesis 32:11-12 (NIV)

May my supplication come before you; deliver me according to your promise.

Psalms 119:170 (NIV)

Now therefore, O LORD God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and his house, confirm it forever, and do as You have spoken, that Your name may be magnified forever, by saying, 'The LORD of hosts is God over Israel'; and may the house of Your servant David be established before You. 2 Samuel 7:25-26 (NASB)

I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.

Psalms 119:58 (NIV)

Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live; And do not let me be ashamed of my hope.

Psalms 119:116 (NASB)

In 2 Chronicles 20, before he went out to fight the enemy King Jehoshaphat reminded God of His promise of protection.

The promises of God are central to answered prayer. When we pray in tune with what God promises, we know that we are praying according to the will of God.

18. There is a lot of variety in Biblical prayers.

Prayer is not limited to any particular time of the day or to any particular position to be in while praying. Prayer can be silent or it can be spoken. There were some very long prayers and there were short prayers.

A. There are Biblical examples of people who prayed at all times of the day.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Daniel 6:10 (KJV)

O Lord, God of my salvation; I cry out day and night before you. Psalm 88:1 (ESV)

I rise before dawn and cry for help; Psalm 119:147a (ESV)

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to you all day long. Psalm 86:3 (NIV)

Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments. Psalm 119:164 (KJV)

Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Acts 10:30 (NIV)

B. People prayed from a variety of positions.

There is no command in Scripture relating to the position we should be in to pray. However, there are many examples of kneeling, bowing, standing with outstretched arms, or even falling on their face before God in prayer. Godly prayer can be given from any position; however, kneeling or bowing while we pray does, in a physical way, indicate submission and a reverence for God. The Greek word most often translated “pray” in the New Testament means to bend or to bow the knee.

And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. 1 Kings 8:54 (KJV)

And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keeps covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart: 1 Kings 8:22-23 (KJV)

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, Matthew 26:39 (KJV)

But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, Acts 9:40a (NASB)

Then I fell down on my face and cried out with a loud voice and said, “Ah, Lord God! Will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?” Ezekiel 11:13b (ESV)

And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God. 1 Kings 18:39 (KJV)

I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.
1 Timothy 2:8 (NIV)

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; John 17:1 (ESV)

But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ Luke 18:13 (ESV)

And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Acts 20:36 (NKJV)

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ... Acts 7:59a (NIV)

From inside the fish Jonah prayed... Jonah 2:1a (NIV)

C. Prayers were silent, whispered, spoken, or spoken loudly.

Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard.
1 Samuel 1:13a (NIV)

...they could barely whisper a prayer. Isaiah 26:16b (NIV)

...and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God. Nehemiah 9:4b (KJV)

I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, ... Deuteronomy 9:26a (KJV)

And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, ... Luke 11:2a (KJV)

D. There were some very long prayers and there were some very short prayers.

Nehemiah prayed... **“Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands”.** Nehemiah 6:9b (KJV)

But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Matthew 14:30 (NASB)

So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. Nehemiah 1:4 (NKJV)

19. The Bible uses several different words for prayer.

...exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 1 Timothy 2:1 (KJV)

So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. Daniel 9:3 (NIV)

...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- Ephesians 6:18 (NKJV)

There are quite a number of different words used in the Bible for prayer. Most of these words basically mean the same thing, but they each have their own shade of meaning. Many of the following words have meanings not associated with prayer. The following definitions are given for these words as they are used in relation to prayer.

Pray: This is a general word which simply means “pray”. It is not a technical word.

Petition: To ask. To ask for a specific thing.

Request: To ask. What is being asked for.

Supplication: Praying about a need.

Intercede: To pray for another person’s need.

Ask: A general term simply meaning to ask God for something.

Call: A general word used to indicate prayer to God.

Plea: Primarily an Old Testament word meaning to state one’s case before God.

Cry: A prayer with more intense feeling and urgency.

Beseech: To pray with intensity.

Fast: Voluntarily abstaining from food while concentrating on prayer.

20. We should pray when we are alone with God, and we should pray together with others.

But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:6 (NASB)

When we are alone with God, we can have a time of Bible reading, meditation, prayer, and communion with God. It is very important to regularly have this time alone with God.

Not only are we to pray when we are alone with God, we are also to pray together with fellow believers.

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God... Acts 4:23-24a (NIV)

Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. Acts 12:5 (NKJV)

When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. Acts 12:12 (ESV)

The book of Acts records the beginning of the church. It records that the early Christians met together

for prayer many times. God is pleased when His people get together and pray, and He promises to be in their midst.

21. Families should pray together.

It has been said that families that pray together, stay together. Husbands and wives need to pray together. It deepens their trust in the Lord and their love and trust for each other. Fathers and mothers need to pray with their children, teaching them to pray. Having family Bible reading and prayer together is an absolute must in training our children to love and serve the Lord.

There does not seem to be a specific verse instructing parents and children to pray together. However, husbands are responsible for the spiritual well-being of their wives and parents are responsible to train their children. Prayer is such a fundamental part of this process that there is no question that husbands and wives and their children must pray together.

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4 (NIV)

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. Ephesians 5:25-27 (NASB)

Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, ...
Lamentations 2:19a (NIV)

Chapter Seven

But I'm Just an Ordinary Person -- I'm Not a Super Saint

Learning About Prayer from Psalm 143

Like many of the psalms, Psalm 143 is rich in depth and in what we can learn from it. We can learn precious truths about prayer as we digest its contents. Before you go through this study, open your Bible and read Psalm 143 several times. Take your time and think about it as you read. Ask God to give you an understanding of what is said in this psalm.

In this study we are going to see that God answers the prayer of imperfect Christians. However, nothing that is said in this study should be taken as an excuse for sin or for a lack of commitment in the life of a believer.

Many Christians want to deepen their walk with God. They want to deepen their prayer life. But many feel that they are just ordinary people and simply do not measure up to the high standards sometimes given in Scripture. They just don't feel like they have the spiritual caliber to be much of a "prayer warrior".

Understanding Psalm 143 can be a big encouragement to those of us who feel much more like ordinary people rather than being a "super saint". The way this psalm begins, David is not feeling anything like a "super saint". He is desperate and afraid. I suspect that at this point he was not feeling very "spiritual" at all.

A simple outline of this psalm is as follows:

- Verses 1-4 Praying in desperation and fear
- Verses 5-6 Prayer of remembering, meditation, restoration, and hunger for God
- Verses 7-10 Praying with confidence
- Verses 11-12 Praying and exalting God
- Verse 12b Prayer of total submission

In this prayer David goes from desperation and fear to confidence and submission.

O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief. Psalm 143:1 (NIV)

This psalm begins with David asking God to hear his prayer, which was a cry for mercy. The word "cry" indicates that David was praying with deep feeling. David was in trouble and he was crying out to God for mercy.

In Scripture, mercy is God's compassion to man when man is in need or in trouble. In this psalm we will see that David was being pursued and harassed by his enemies. He was depressed and pushed to the point of feeling that he would die if he were not given relief.

Few Christians, at least here in America, fear for their lives because they are literally being pursued by enemies. However, all genuine Christians will, at some time in their life, face problems that cause deep trouble, pain, or distress. If this is true in your life, you may be feel some of the desperation David was feeling as he wrote this psalm.

In this verse there is a profound truth that most Christians intellectually know but few really grasp. That truth is simply this. *We do not come to God on the basis of our own spiritual performance in life but on the basis of God's own faithfulness and righteousness.*

"In your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief".

We come to God on the basis who He is, not on the basis of our superior performance. David comes to God in desperation, *not on the basis of his own merits, goodness or righteousness, but rather he comes to God on the basis of God's own righteousness, His mercy, and His faithfulness.* This should be a huge blessing and encouragement to us. You do not have to be a big-name preacher, college professor, conference speaker or some kind of a "super saint". Desperate, fearful, ordinary believers come to Him because of who He is, rather than because we have it all together in our walk with Him. This truth takes a big load off our shoulders.

God is faithful. He can be trusted. And God always does what is right. God will hear our prayers, not because we have been such high performing Christians, but because He is faithful and He will do what is right.

Daniel also based his prayer on the same truth. Here is Daniel 9:18b in two different translations.

For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. Daniel 9:18b (ESV)

...for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. Daniel 9:18b (NASB)

Our right to come to God in prayer is not based on our performance in the Christian life or our own righteousness; rather it is based on His righteousness and His faithfulness. We come to Him not because we are worthy but instead we come because of His great mercy toward unworthy people.

If we have been lax in our Christian life, we don't want to compound the problem by not coming to God in prayer.

In many places in Scripture God promises to protect and to provide for us. Because God is faithful and because God is righteousness, He will keep His promises. If He fails to keep His promises, He would no longer be faithful and He would no longer be righteous. He would, in fact, no longer be God. However, because He is the faithful and the righteous God, He will hear and answer our prayers.

Most of us have sometimes felt that we really haven't been the kind of a Christian that God expects us to be; therefore, it probably would not do a lot of good to pray. That kind of thinking is not from God. God deeply wants us to pray, and He is grieved when we do not pray.

These truths do not imply that sin is overlooked by God and these truths do not excuse wrong behavior or lack of commitment. Not in the least. To grow in our walk with God, we must commit ourselves to doing His will and not hindering the Spirit of God. But even when we want to do what is right and we want to serve the Lord, it seems as if we still feel like we are falling short of God's standards. And, in fact, we are falling short, but God in His own faithfulness and righteousness still hears and answers the prayers of His own children.

Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you.

Psalm 143:2 (NIV)

In this verse, David recognized that he was a sinful man and fell short of God's high standards. But in almost a brazen way David tells God not to judge him because no one alive could meet God's high standards. David not only recognized his own sinfulness and weakness, but he also knew that God was faithful and righteous. *David knew that he and everyone else fell short of God's standard of righteousness and he did not let it stop him from coming to God in prayer.*

As we read through this prayer, we can see that David demonstrated a love for God and a commitment to serve Him, but he still fell short of God's high standard of righteousness. Most of us feel the same way. We want to do what is right but we seemingly always fall short. We feel inadequate in our walk with God and in our desire to pray as God would have us to pray. *However, like David and Daniel, we must come to Him not on the authority of our own righteousness, but based on the faithfulness, the righteousness, and the mercy of God.*

The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground; he makes me dwell in darkness like those long dead. So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed.

Psalm 143:3-4 (NIV)

In verse 3, we find out why David is crying to God for mercy. He is being pursued by his enemies. Some of the translations say "persecuted" rather than "pursued". We are not told exactly what the circumstances are or what time this is in David's life. However, it is not hard to visualize David and his small band of men being pursued by King Saul and all the armies of Israel. He is outnumbered and hiding in a cave. David may have been in that cave for more than a year. When David prayed, "*he (the enemy) makes me dwell in darkness like those long dead*", he may have been referring to living and hiding in a dark cave for many days, weeks, and even months.

Whatever the exact circumstances may have been, David is deeply discouraged and depressed. He feels crushed, living in darkness, his spirit is faint, and he is dismayed. In his state of deep discouragement, he cries out to God for mercy.

In the following verses David takes time to remember how faithful God has always been in the past. He longs for fellowship with God as he had experienced in the past.

I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done. I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.

Psalm 143:5-6 (NIV)

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands. I spread out my hands to You; My soul longs for You like a thirsty land. Psalm 143:5-6 (NKJV)

In the depths of despair, David began to remember what God had done in the past. He may have remembered how God enabled him to protect his sheep from wild animals that tried to kill them. He may have remembered when God delivered Goliath into his hands and he may have remembered the times that God had given him victory over his enemies in battle.

David also may have remembered that God created the earth and all that is in it. David loved what God had created and he was often filled with awe as he thought of the wonder and beauty of what God

had made. David may have remembered that the writings of Moses recorded how God had delivered His people from bondage to the Egyptians and how God had cared for His people in the desert and how He had given them a land flowing with milk and honey. He may have remembered the unfaithfulness of his fathers, but how God, because of His own faithfulness and righteousness, still loved and cared for them.

As David remembered, he longed for the presence and blessing of God. He held his hands up to God, longing to feel the presence and the love of God. Most of us, as adults, can remember a time when a young child came to us and held up his hands, wanting to be picked up and hugged and loved. That child may have been one of our own children or a grandchild, and we, in love, picked up that child and hugged him/her, expressing our deep love for that child. Even if that child was not one of our own, we would still pick up that young child and give him the attention and love he desired.

If we, as sinful humans, would love and protect one of our children who came to us with outstretched hands wanting to be picked up, how much more will our loving Father pick us up and lovingly protect us and provide for us when we come to Him with outstretched arms, longing to be loved and protected.

Answer me quickly, O LORD; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit. Psalm 143:7 (NIV)

As David lifted his hands to God, he prayed that God would answer him quickly. In boldness he prayed, *“Do not hide your face from me”*. If God did not answer quickly, David felt he would be like a dead man. David’s only hope for life and deliverance from his enemies was through the intervention of God. Even though David was desperate, he knew God well enough that he could confidently expect that God would not hide His face and that God would answer quickly.

God had revealed to David that he (David) would be the next king of Israel. David knew that if his enemies killed him, the Word of God would have been proved to be wrong, and that was impossible. Based on his confidence in the Word of God, he could pray with a great deal of confidence and boldness. He may have thought something like this: *“God deliver me quickly, You can hide your face no longer or they will take my life and Your word will not be fulfilled”*.

**Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.
Rescue me from my enemies, O LORD, for I hide myself in you.
Teach me to do your will, for you are my God;
may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.**
Psalm 143:8-10 (NIV)

Here the tone of the prayer changes from despair to greater confidence. As stated in verse 2, David recognized that no one, including himself, was righteous in God’s eyes. However, that did not excuse a shallow commitment. In these three verses David made five requests to the Lord. After each of the first four requests he followed the request with a statement of commitment. David knew he was not righteous in God’s sight, but he was still deeply committed to knowing, walking, and fellowshiping with God.

The first four of these five requests are as follows:

1. *Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you.*
2. *Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.*
3. *Rescue me from my enemies, O LORD, for I hide myself in you.*
4. *Teach me to do your will, for you are my God;*

Let's look at each of these four statements one by one:

1. *Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you.*

When David was in despair, he began to remember and to meditate on what God had done in the past. As he remembered, his spirit was revived. He reached out to God and his soul longed for God. As he did this, his attitude changed. He became optimistic again. David looked forward to a brighter tomorrow and he could see God's unfailing love. David expected that in the morning God would show him the way he should go.

David put his trust in the Lord. He was confident enough in the Lord that he could ask for an answer to his prayer by morning. We would think that after all David had gone through that his confidence in the Lord would be at a very low point. He had most likely been praying for an extended period of time for deliverance from his enemies. As he began this prayer, his spirit was still very depressed because of the constant pursuit of the enemy. Yet, in spite of the difficult and depressing times, he reached out to God, and his trust in God was still firm. He was still confident that God, in his love, would not fail him, and that he would see God's answer by the next morning.

2. *Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.*

At this point in David's life, he needed God's direction. He was being pursued by his enemies and they were about to overcome him, so David asked God to show him the way to go. This may be a very literal request for God to show him which route to take in order to escape from his enemies. This certainly fits within the context. Or this may be a more general request asking for God's direction in life. In either case, David could expect God to lead him because he not only put his trust in God, he also submitted to Him, and he went still deeper and worshiped God from his innermost being. In verse 6, David's soul longed for God as a dry desert would thirst for water. The phrase, "*for to you I lift up my soul*", indicates that David worshiped God with all his being.

Most of us are guilty of some very shallow worship of God. Many of us who lead in corporate worship are more interested in drawing attention to ourselves than we are of hallowing the name of God. We are so shallow we don't even know how to "*lift up our soul*" to God. "God, teach us to love You in such a way that from our very innermost being we lift our souls to You".

3. *Rescue me from my enemies, O LORD, for I hide myself in you.*

David recognized that it was only God who could deliver him. David's enemies were pursuing him until he felt close to death. David's only hope was the Lord. In times like this, we hide ourselves in the very being of God Himself. David was willing to trust God with his very life.

We, as Christians today, do not need to wait until our life is in danger to trust God with our very life. We need to recognize that at all times our life is in His hands. He protects us and continually preserves our life. We will not die until He calls us home. This should be a source of peace to each and every child of God. Our very life is in His hands. We can, with utmost confidence, hide ourselves in the hands of God.

4. *Teach me to do your will, for you are my God;*

Amid all the uncertainty, desperation, and distress David desired to do the will of God. When we pray, “teach me to do your will”, it is clearly a prayer of complete and total submission to God. When we genuinely want to see God’s will done, we no longer want to do things our own way. As people, it is natural for us to want our own way. When we commit ourselves to making God our God, our whole outlook on life changes. We no longer focus on ourselves; we focus on the Lord. In every area of our lives, we seek to do the will of God. It is complete and total submission to Him.

After David prayed to be rescued from his enemies, he confirmed his complete submission to doing the will of God. He declared his loyalty to God in the statement “*for you are my God*”. David was committing to doing His will and making God his only God. David loved and sought-after God and no one could take His place in David’s heart and soul.

These four requests in Psalm 143:8-10 are followed by one more request:

5. *may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.*

By asking for the leading of the Spirit of God, David was putting the direction of his life completely and totally into the hand of God. This request, along with the request immediately before it, “*Teach me to do your will, for you are my God*”, indicates a total surrender of his own will and the direction of his life to God.

David was experiencing some very “rough ground” in his life. David recognized that it was only God who could restore peace and “level ground” back to his life. God, at times, allows all of us to experience rough ground. We must let these times deepen our walk with Him and strengthen our faith.

David is giving the leadership and control of his life to the Spirit of God. This is hard for many of us to do. We want control of our own life. This is what our society stresses, even demands. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we relinquish control of our life to Him and make Him the Lord of our life. This is the very heart and soul of being a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life; in your righteousness, bring me out of trouble. In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes, for I am your servant.

Psalm 143:11-12 (NIV)

In these two closing verses, there are more insights into Biblical prayer and walking with God. There are three phrases, each of which is a foundation for productive prayer. Understanding these three foundations helps us understand prayer as God designed prayer to be.

As we saw in the first verse of this chapter, it is because of God’s faithfulness and righteousness that

we can expect God to answer our prayer. The last two verses of this chapter develop this in a deeper way.

These last two verses are built around three key phrases. These phrases are as follows:

1. *For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life;*
2. *in your righteousness, bring me out of trouble.*
3. *In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes,*

Each of these three phrases begins with a Biblical justification for the request which follows. The actual requests, especially the first two, follow along the same line as what he has prayed earlier in this psalm. However, preceding each request there is a statement that indicates a reason that David could expect God to answer his prayer. We are going to look carefully at each of these three phrases.

1. *For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life;*

After understanding the urgency of this prayer, we would probably conclude that David's primary motive for praying was to be rescued from his enemies. His life was in danger and He wanted God to spare his life. Yet, in spite of the urgency, there is an even deeper motive for his prayers.

"For your name's sake," speaks directly to David's motive for praying. David was asking God to spare his life so that the name of God would be uplifted and glorified. This may sound so idealistic that we doubt its accuracy; yet, that is the fundamental reason David prayed.

The most fundamental reason we exist is to glorify God, and David recognized that. David's desire to keep on living was so that he could glorify God. As David ended this prayer for God to preserve his life, he made it clear that his whole reason for life was that the name of God would be honored.

Understanding this should cause us to focus on glorifying God's name as we pray. Do we pray so that we might have an easier life? Do we pray so that our friends and family might have an easier life? Do we pray because "good Christians" are supposed to pray? We all need to carefully examine why we pray.

If glorifying the name of God were to become the overriding purpose for our prayers, for many it would revolutionize their prayers. We would experience a new power and authority in prayer. Yes, we should still pray for our individual daily needs, but we pray so that we will be equipped to glorify Him. We would also pray for our spiritual needs so that He will be uplifted in our life. We would pray for the spiritual needs of fellow Christians so that God will be glorified in their lives. We would pray that lost people would come to know Him so that He will be glorified.

2. *in your righteousness, bring me out of trouble.*

In the first verse of this psalm, David comes to God, not on the basis of his own performance but on the basis of God's own faithfulness and righteousness. As this psalm opens, David is discouraged and fearful. As the psalm progresses, David's deep faith and confidence in God is revived, and David demonstrates a deep love, a deep level of confidence, and a deep level of commitment to God, even though he is still in a desperate situation.

Yet, in spite of this deep level of commitment which must have pleased the heart of God, David still recognized that he could not come to God on the authority of his own goodness. After his faith was revived, he still recognized that he must come to God, not based on his own righteousness, but on God's. When we are "down" spiritually, we do not come to God on the authority of our own performance, and when we are "up" spiritually, we still cannot come to God on the basis of our own righteousness or our own performance.

Again, many of us feel unworthy to come to God expecting Him to answer. We often feel that we will never be able to be a "good Christian", so we may feel like giving up. God's standards are so high, why even try? If any of these thoughts describe you, the truths stated here should be a tremendous encouragement. We come to Him based on His faithfulness and righteousness, not on our own. With that perspective, I can come confidently to God, knowing that He will hear my prayer.

3. *In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes,*

In this, the final request of this prayer, David appeals to the love of God. God hears our prayer not only because He is faithful and righteous, but also because He deeply loves us. God's love is not based on our performance or being a "good Christian". He loves us because He has chosen to love us, even when we are not very loveable.

The final request of this prayer is for complete victory over his enemies. David was a warrior and had led armies in fighting against the foes of God's chosen people. He prays for complete victory, even the destruction of those who were out to kill him.

God Himself hates sin and at times He expresses hate for sinners as well. (Psalm 5:4-6, Psalm 11:5, Hosea 9:15-16, Romans 9:13) Numerous times God destroyed those who rebelled against Him. Examples are the Canaanites, Sodom and Gomorrah, and Ananias and Sapphira. Also see Deuteronomy 32:39-42.

...for I am your servant.

The very last words of this prayer sum up David's commitment to the Lord. "*I am your servant*". David, with all his human weaknesses and imperfections, was committed to serving the Lord.

God calls all of us to serve Him. That is fundamental to being a follower of our Lord. Being a servant profoundly shapes the tone of our prayers.

I hope that you have learned and been blessed and encouraged by the study of this rich chapter. Ordinary people like you and I can have a rich prayer life, not because we are such great Christians, but because He is faithful and He is righteous. What a great God we serve!

Chapter Eight

Using the Word of God as a Basis for Prayer

A simple but profound way to pray is to use passages of Scripture as your basis for prayer. This can be done with essentially any Scripture. Any Biblical instruction can be a basis for prayer.

This kind of praying can be a key to drawing near to God and growing deeper in our walk with Him. *When we sincerely pray using the Word of God itself, we know that we are praying in tune with the will and the heart of God.*

For example, in Colossians 3:16 it tells us to *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”* (KJV). You can use this verse as a basis and pray that the Word of God will genuinely and continually dwell in you richly. You can pray that your husband, or your wife, and your children, and your parents will let the Word of God richly dwell in them. You can pray that your pastor will let the Word of God richly dwell in him and you can pray that your church will be let the Word of God dwell in them richly. We can pray that Christians the world over will let the Word of God richly dwell in them.

In Ephesians 5:18 we are told to be filled, or controlled, by the Spirit. Using this verse as a basis, pray that you will allow the Spirit of God to control your life. Then commit yourself to being continually filled and led by the Spirit of God. Pray that your wife or husband will be a Spirit-controlled person. Pray that your pastor will be a Spirit-controlled man. Pray that your church will be a Spirit-controlled church. Pray that Christians all over the world will genuinely be Spirit-controlled Christians.

This way of praying relates to essentially any situation that comes up in life. Find a passage of Scripture that applies to the situation you are in and then pray, using that passage of Scripture as a guide for your prayer. The possibilities for praying in this way are limitless. Any instruction for godly living in the Bible can be used as the basis for solid Biblical prayers.

Here, from the first three verses of Psalm 1, is another example of how one can pray in this way.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. Psalm 1:1-3 (ESV)

When you read, *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;”* you can pray something like this:

“Father, I commit myself to not listening to the advice of ungodly men. Give me discernment to know and understand the difference between what is from the world and what is from You. I commit myself to not join in with those who live sinful lifestyles and who mock Your holy name.

When you read; *“but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night”* you can pray something like this: “Father, help me to develop a love for Your Word. I commit myself to regularly reading it, absorbing it, and put it into practice. Increase my understanding of your Word. I commit myself to being more faithful in my reading and regularly meditating on your Word.

When you read, *“He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its*

leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers”, you can pray something like this: “Father, I want my life to be productive and fruitful. I want to bear spiritual fruit. I commit myself to serving You, and to letting the Word of God dwell in me richly, and to be controlled by Your Spirit. I don’t want my life to be wasted and useless. I want to be like a tree planted by rivers of water that brings forth abundant fruit. Father, with all my heart, I am following You and I ask You to accomplish Your own will and purpose in and through me, whatever that may be. In all my ways I acknowledge You and ask You to direct my paths. Father, it is a high honor to be Your servant, and I love You with all my heart.”

For another example, carefully read Colossians 1:9-12 several times.

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience ; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. Colossians 1:9-12 (NASB)

Now let’s look at this passage a section at a time.

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you...

As you read how Paul had not ceased to pray for the Colossian people, you may need to confess that you have not been faithful in praying for your fellow believers and have even been negligent to pray for your even your own family. You can commit yourself before the Lord to be more faithful in prayer.

and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Pray that you will know and do the will of God. Commit yourself to being a better student of the Word of God so that you will know God’s will better, and that you will have spiritual wisdom and understanding. Pray that others, your family, your pastor, your church, and Christians worldwide will have wisdom and understanding and know and do the will of God.

so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects,

As you read this you can examine your own life to see how you can live in a more worthy manner of your calling. Pray that God will reveal where you fall short and commit to correcting that behavior. Ask God to give you a desire to please Him in every way.

...bearing fruit in every good work, ...

Again, commit yourself to being a fruit-bearing Christian. In Scripture we learn that to bear fruit we must abide in God and in His Word. Committing to bear fruit is a commitment to regularly absorbing

the Word of God. Pray that you and other Christians will regularly abide in and absorb the Word of God.

and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Again, we increase our knowledge of God by increasing our understanding of the Word of God. The Christian life is a growing process. As we increase our understanding, we grow in our walk with Him. Ask God to give us the discipline and understanding to grow. Again, we commit ourselves to increasing our understanding of the Word, and we make its teaching the prayer of our hearts.

strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience

The Spirit of God is the source of our strength and power. As we read Scripture like this, we pray that we will allow the Spirit of God to control our lives and we commit to regularly absorbing the Word of God. As we read about steadfastness and patience, we go to the Lord in submission and we ask for and commit ourselves to being faithful followers of our Lord. We pray that we will be faithful in trials and that we will not lose heart when difficult times come.

joyously giving thanks to the Father;

Many of us at times find it hard to be thankful. In difficult times we can always find things that we can be thankful for, and even be joyful in our thanks. Ask God to help you see the many areas in which you can be thankful. Then stop and give Him thanks. Thank Him for your salvation, for the Word, for your family, for your church, for the difficult times of your life, and for _____, and for _____, and for _____.

who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

Take some time and think about what God has done for you. Then thank and worship Him for saving you and qualifying you to enjoy a rich eternal inheritance that is waiting for you in heaven.

Developing a Deeper Walk with God

A few years back we let it be known to those who were familiar with our ministry that we would like to have a few books to start a library in the small Indian church we were attending. We were a little amazed at the response. There were over four thousand books given. We have developed libraries in two Indian churches, including the one we're are now helping to plant. We have also given hundreds of duplicate copies of books to three other Indian churches to put in their libraries. My wife spent hundreds of hours organizing and categorizing the books. Since I am a conservative old codger, I determined that no book would go into the libraries unless I was reasonably sure that it accurately represented Biblical teaching and practice. If I was unsure about the author or of the contents of the book, I would read the book myself before placing it in one of the libraries. In fact, I still have several boxes of books to read. (Thanks to all of you who donated books to make this ministry possible.)

In this process I read a good many book that, in one way or another, talked about developing a deeper walk with God. Some were by well-known Christian authors. I wanted to learn for my own sake and I wanted anyone who might read one of these books to be helped. All I can say is that I was disappointed in book after book. Most were shallow and some did not accurately represent Biblical truth at all. I am not trying to claim any sort of deeper knowledge or insight, but I believe most of them missed the boat.

From what I have learned, I believe that what we have covered in this short chapter can be a key to drawing near to God. When we sincerely pray the Word of God, we are bringing ourselves into line with the will and the heart of God.

May I be so bold as to suggest four easy-to-understand steps to drawing near to God or to developing a deeper walk with God?

1. Commit to developing your understanding of the Word of God. You need to regularly read and then think (meditate) about what you read. As you read, regularly ask God for a right understanding of Biblical truth.
2. Meditate on the Word and then pray, using the Word of God as has been suggested in this study guide. Again, praying the Word is obviously in sync with the heart and the will of God.
3. Listen to godly teachers who accurately teach Biblical truth. This is important. However, be very careful, even skeptical. Many teachers are careless and shallow and Biblical truth is often distorted and incorrectly taught. Many flat out teach wrong doctrine. Shallow or distorted Biblical truth or untruth does not lead one to know God or to draw near to Him.
4. Put effort and discipline into your commitments. Commit to being faithful, even in the hard times.

Chapter Nine

Suggestions for a Daily “Quiet time”

As we have learned, we are instructed in the Word of God to pray continually. This does not mean that we are to close our eyes and bow our heads and pray out loud all day long. However, it does mean that we can regularly communicate with our Lord throughout the day. We can talk with Him throughout the day as we face all kinds of situations. Our prayers do not have to be long structured prayers. In Nehemiah 6:9, Nehemiah prayed, *“now strengthen my hands”*. That is about a one or two second prayer, but it was what was needed in the situation that Nehemiah was in. God answered his prayer and Nehemiah stood firm without wavering.

Essentially everything we do or any situation we face can be a reason to pray. As I sat down to work on this study on prayer, I again asked the Lord to direct my thoughts and the words that I wrote. When my wife was having trouble sending some e-mails, I asked the Lord to help us figure out the problem. We need to bring the daily problems we face to the Lord. He is delighted when we regularly talk to Him throughout the day.

The kinds of things that we can thank and praise Him for are endless. When you see a beautiful sunset, you can praise Him—the creator of all heaven and earth. When you walk into your home, thank Him for providing a warm comfortable home. Regularly thank Him for your salvation. Thank Him for your physical life and health. Thank Him for your job, even if you have trouble with the boss from time to time. Again, the kinds of things that we can be thankful for and praise Him for are endless.

This kind of on-going praying and communicating is the very heart of walking close to the Lord. If you want to walk close to the Lord, talk to Him throughout the day. God is pleased when we do and we are strengthened as we learn to walk in close fellowship with Him.

In order to maintain this pattern of walking with the Lord and growing in our walk with Him, we also need to set aside a certain amount of time each day to read the Word, to think, and to have a more concentrated time of undisturbed prayer.

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, ...

Matthew 6:6 (NIV)

Most Christians are not pastors, missionaries, or in some other position which allows them to spend a significant amount of time in the Word of God as part of their “job”. All of us, including ordinary non-professional Christians, need to set aside a certain amount of time each day for a more structured time of Bible reading and prayer.

Sometimes in Christian circles this time we set apart for Bible reading and prayer is called our “quiet time”, or “devotions”. This is important. If you regularly spend time with the Lord in Bible reading and prayer, you will grow in your walk with God. If you do not do this, your growth will most likely be slow and sporadic, and you may often feel spiritually dry and discouraged.

There are also times when we, as husbands, need to have a time of Bible reading and prayer with our wives and our children. If the husband will not do this, then wives need to have a time of Bible reading and prayer with the children.

Throughout this study, beginning with the first study guide, the importance of absorbing and putting the Word of God into practice is stressed. For consistent growth it is important that we regularly absorb the Word of God and that we regularly pray. There are times when our routine will be interrupted; however, we must guard against regularly letting other things interfere with our time in the Word and prayer. And we must also make being involved in a solid Bible teaching and practicing church a high priority. These are all the lifeblood of our walk with the Lord.

Many Christians feel frustrated in their attempts at having a consistent productive daily “quiet time” with God. Following are some suggestions that may be helpful. If you have already developed a healthy pattern of time with the Lord and you and your family are growing in your walk with Him, then there is no reason to change. However, if you are struggling in this area, then the following suggestions may be helpful.

Suggestions for a Daily “Quiet Time” of Bible Reading and Prayer

1. Start your “quiet time” by finding a time and place where, as much as is possible, you can clear your schedule and be alone and uninterrupted.
2. As much as possible, clear your mind of everything else that would distract you.
3. I personally often start by praying Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV).

**Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.**

4. Think back over the last few hours or days. Confess any known sin that you have not already confessed.
5. Now carefully and thoughtfully read through the passage of Scripture in your reading schedule. It is best to read the passage through several times. It is also a good idea to follow a systematic plan of Bible reading. If you do not have one, there is a two-year reading schedule geared for new Christians at the end of this study.
6. Spend some time thinking about or meditating on what you have read and learned. *Pray through the passage with thanksgiving and commitment.* Worship and praise God in relation to the truths you learn from this passage. This time of meditation can be a precious time of allowing God to speak to you, giving you understanding and insights that will sustain and strengthen your walk with the Lord.

Scriptural meditation is to quietly and unhurriedly think about or to ponder Biblical truths, asking God for a right understanding, and submitting to the understanding and direction He gives.

7. You may want to ask yourself questions about the passage you read such as:
 - a. What are the major truths in this Scripture passage?
 - b. What are the instructions or principles for living?
 - c. Are there any direct or implied promises or warnings?
 - d. What can I learn about God from this passage?

8. Now, seeking the Spirit's direction, determine what actions or attitudes in your life need to be changed and brought into line with what you have learned from His Word. Then determine that, with His strengthening, you will work on making those changes.

9. Now spend time in praise and thanksgiving and praying about current needs and those items on your prayer list.

Note: You may wish to jot down any blessings or insights you received. It is amazing how quickly we forget things. By writing them down it also helps us to have them available to share with others who can be encouraged and benefit from what we have learned.

Biblical Prayer Requests and Commitments

These are Biblical prayer requests that you can pray for yourself, for your family, your church family, and for others.

A. Relating to Our Walk with God -- Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. Psalm 86:11 (NIV)

1. You will hallow (or reverence) God's name. The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6
2. The Word of God will dwell in you richly. Colossians 3:16
3. You will earnestly seek God with all your heart. Psalm 63:1, Jeremiah 29:13
4. You will draw near to God. James 4:8
5. God will reign in your life. The Lord's Prayer (Thy kingdom come), Matthew 6
6. You will love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength. Deuteronomy 6:5, Mark 12:28-31
7. You will be continually filled with the Spirit of God. Ephesians 5:18
8. You will be strengthened with power through the Spirit of God in your inner being. Ephesians 3:16
9. You will be filled with the fruit of the Spirit. (love, joy, peace, self-control, etc.) Galatians 5:22-23
10. You will live and walk by faith. Hebrews 11:5, Jude 1:20
11. You will know and do the will of God. The Lord's Prayer, Colossians 1:9
12. You will be devoted to praying as the Word teaches us to pray. Matt. 6:9-15, Luke 11:1-13, Col. 4:2
13. You will be faithful in prayer and will not give up. Luke 18:1, Ephesians 6:18
14. Your motives for praying will be right. James 4:3
15. You will know God's love that surpasses knowledge. Ephesians 3:19, 1 John 3:1
16. You will put Biblical love into practice. I Corinthians 13:1-8, 13
17. You will be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 8:29
18. The Spirit of God will enable you to correctly understand Biblical truth. 1 Corinthians 2:6-13
19. You will not believe or accept wrong or distorted Biblical teaching. Acts 20:30, Psalm 1:1
20. You will have wisdom. Ephesians 1:17, James 1:5
21. You will continually grow in your walk with God. 2 Peter 3:18
22. You will let the peace of God rule in your heart. Colossians 3:15, Philippians 4:7
23. You will be delivered from Satan and all his deceitfulness. Matthew 6:13, John 17:15, Ephesians 6:10-18
24. You will look forward to all that God has ahead for us. Hebrews 6:17-20, Revelation 21:1-4
25. Your whole being -- spirit, soul and body -- will be blameless at His coming. 1 Thessalonians 5:23
26. You will remain faithful until death. 2 Timothy 4:6-8

B. Praise and Thanksgiving -- In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB)

1. Thank and praise God for His death on the cross and for your salvation. 2 Corinthians 9:15
2. Thank and praise Him for His love, His grace, and His mercy. 2 John 1:3, 1 Timothy 1:2
3. Thank and praise Him for your many spiritual blessings. Ephesians 1:1-14
4. Thank and praise Him for your family.
5. Thank and praise Him for daily physical blessings and for your health.
6. Thank and praise Him for the difficult times in life that strengthen your faith. James 1:2
7. Thank Him for ____ (You fill in the blank.).

C. Relating to Our Way of Life -- But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15-16 (NIV)

1. You will actively seek to live a holy life. 1 Peter 1:15-16
2. You will consider yourself dead to sin and selfish desires. Romans 6
3. God will search your heart and reveal any sinful way in you. Psalm 139:23-24
4. You will avoid every form of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:22
5. You will present yourself to God as an instrument of righteousness. Romans 6
6. You will be filled with the fruit of righteousness. Philippians 1:11
7. You will not become weary in doing good or lose heart. Galatians 6:9, Hebrews 12:3
8. You will not be angry but forgiving as God has forgiven you. The Lord's Prayer, Colossians 3:13
9. You will be a good steward of all that God has given you. Matthew 25:14-30, 1 Corinthians 4:2
10. You will not love money and will be content with what you have. Philippians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 6:6-10
11. All your attitudes and your actions will please and glorify God. 1 Corinthians 10:31, Psalm 19:14

D. Relating to Fellow Believers and Our Families -- Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11 (NIV)

1. Your love will increase and overflow for fellow believers. 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 1 Corinthians 13
2. You will faithfully pray for fellow believers. Ephesians 6:18, James 5:16
3. You will encourage, build up, and serve fellow believers. Hebrews 10:23-25
4. You will control how you talk about others. Ephesians 4:29
5. God will protect believers worldwide who suffer persecution because of their faith. 1 Corinthians 12:26
6. Your marriage will be strong and that you will love and respect your wife/husband. Ephesians 5:22-23
7. You will actively teach your children (grandchildren) to walk with God. Deuteronomy 11:19-20
8. Your children (grandchildren) will be obedient and respectful. Ephesians 6:1-3

E. Relating to Evangelism -- Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."
Matthew 9:37-38 (ESV)

1. You will be an active witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:20
2. God will open the door for you to present the gospel. Colossians 4:3
3. You will declare the gospel clearly and fearlessly. Ephesians 6:20, Colossians 4:4
4. Pray for individual family members, friends, and others who are lost. Romans 10:1
5. God will send workers with the gospel to the lost all around the world. Luke 10:2, Acts 1:8
6. The gospel message will spread rapidly and be honored. 2 Thessalonians 3:1
7. God will protect His messengers by the power of His name. 2 Thessalonians 3:2, John 17:11
8. Pray for individual missionaries that you know (or know about). Ephesians 6:19-20

F. Relating to Our Daily Needs -- Give us today our daily bread. Matthew 6:11 (NIV)

1. God will supply your daily needs. The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6
2. You will have good health. 3 John 2a

G. Relating to Those Who Are in Positions of Authority Pray ... for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 1 Timothy 2:2 (NIV)

Suggestions for a Prayer List

Many have found it useful to have a prayer list. The value of a prayer list is that we are regularly reminded to pray for things that we would not remember unless we write them down.

There are some things you will want to pray about every day---your immediate family, your pastor, your close friends, etc. As your prayer list grows longer, you may wish to divide it up into separate requests for each day of the week. At the top of the prayer list, the days of the week are given. You can circle the days so you can remember what you are praying for that day. You can make a list for each day of the week.

You are free to make as many copies of this prayer list as you would like.

For Prayer

Every Day Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday
(Circle the appropriate day.)

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____
- 11. _____
- 12. _____
- 13. _____
- 14. _____
- 15. _____
- 16. _____
- 17. _____
- 18. _____
- 19. _____
- 20. _____

A Two-Year Bible Reading Program

The following Bible reading program is based on the idea of repetitive reading. Instead of reading a lot of Scripture, you read the same section of the Bible for several days. The reason for this is simple. Most of us do not understand everything we read the first time through. This is especially true of the Bible. It is rich in depth. The more we read a section of the Bible, the more we understand it and can put it into practice.

1. **(Week 1)** John 3:16-21 (chapter 3, verses 16-21). Read these verses every day for one week. As you read, think about what you read. Ask God for a right understanding of these verses. If you have questions, ask someone that will give solid Biblical answers. Do not accept everybody's answer as absolute truth. It is a good idea to be skeptical if an answer just doesn't seem right.
2. **(Week 2)** Read 1 John 1:5-10 and 1 John 2:1-6 every day for one week. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to regularly confess our sin. We do this to keep our walk with God fruitful and productive. When we sin, we do not lose our salvation, but there is a loss of our joy and productivity. As soon as you sin, confess it and get back on track with God.
3. **(Week 3)** Psalm 1. Read this chapter at least two times every day for a week. There are many blessings that come from our reading the Word of God and putting it into practice.
4. **(Week 4)** Read Psalm 32 every day for a week. Each day after you have read it, quietly sit back and think about what you have read. Thank God for the truths that you learn. After you have read this psalm for two or three days, begin asking and answering questions like these:

From verses 1 and 2, who is blessed (happy)?

From verses 3 and 4, what is the result of not confessing sin (keeping silent)?

From verse 5, what happens when we confess our sin?

From verse 6, what should godly people do?

From verse 7, what two things does God promise?

From verse 8, what does God promise?

From verse 9, what should we not be like?

From verse 10, what difference is there between the wicked and those who trust in God?

From verse 11, what should believers do?

Every day thank God for saving you and for the things He is doing in your life. Talk to God about yourself, your family, your friends, and others you know.

5. **(Week 5)** Read Psalm 33 every day for a week. Again, each day after you have read it, quietly sit back and think about what you have read. Thank God for the truths that you learn. Again, after you have read this psalm for two or three days, begin asking and answering questions like these:

From verses 1-3. Most of us don't have harps and lyres, but what can we do to show our joy and give God praise?

From verse 4, what does it say about the Word of God?

From verse 5, what does God love?

From verses 6 through 9, what is God's relationship to the earth?

From verse 8, what should our attitude toward God be?

From verse 9, who controls the people and nations on earth?

From verse 10, how long will God's plan stand?

From verses 12 through 15, who does the Lord watch?

From verses 16 through 19, what will not save a nation? Who delivers us in times of trouble?

From verses 20 through 22, what does it mean to "wait" on God?

Who is our hope in?

What should we do while we wait?

6. (Week 6) Read Psalm 34 every day for a week. Follow the same pattern that you followed in weeks one and two. Take time to think about what you read. This time, as you read it verse by verse, you make up the questions in your own mind and then think about the answers. From this psalm ask yourself questions that have to do with what God does for His people and what our response should be. Don't forget to take time to talk to the Lord and thank God for all the things you learn.

7. (Week 7) Now read Psalm 139 every day for a week. Again, take time to think and meditate about what you have read. This is a very personal psalm. It covers how deeply the God of the universe knows and cares about you personally. He protects and leads you. He not only knows you, but He designed you personally and has a purpose for you. The last two verses are a beautiful prayer of submission to the God who knows you so well. Again, after you have read it for two or three days, begin asking yourself questions about what is said and thanking God for the truths you discover.

8. (This will take about two weeks.) Genesis, chapters 1-3. Read one chapter a day. Obviously this will take three days by reading one chapter a day. After you read all three chapters, start with chapter one again and read all three chapters again. Repeat this process until you have read all three chapters at least four times. These are very important chapters. They are the foundation on which all of the rest of the Bible is built. These chapters should be understood exactly as they are written. We don't need to try to change or modify them to accommodate modern "scientific" evolutionary theories. We accept God as a higher authority than man.

9. (This will take about two months.) Now we are going to a longer passage of Scripture in the New Testament. The book of Mark has 16 chapters. The length of the chapters varies. Read about one chapter a day. After you have read all 16 chapters, start over again and read it all the way through again. Then read it all the way through a third time. The purpose of this reading is to get to know the Lord Jesus Christ better. Jesus is not only our Savior; He is also our example of living that we are to follow. If we are to be like Him, we need to know Him as well as possible. Reading the book of Mark through three times will help us to know Him better and to begin to live more like Him. Again, as you read, think and meditate about what you read.

10. (About four or five months) Now read the Book of John. John has 21 chapters. It is a little "deeper" book and you may need to go a little slower. There are some very long chapters. You may wish to take two or even three days to read and think about some of the chapters. You will not understand everything, but keep on reading anyway. As you move along in your reading, you will understand more and more all the time. Read the whole book at least two or three times. The book of John emphasizes the truth that Jesus is God. After you finish this reading, you should have an even greater appreciation of Jesus, who is God Himself, and have a deeper commitment to serve Him.

11. (About one month) Now to a shorter book. The book of 1 John has only five short chapters. Read a chapter a day. Carefully think about what you read. Repeat this process until you have read the book through at least four times. 1 John is a sobering book. It makes us examine our own way of life and ask ourselves if we really know God and if we are living a life pleasing to Him. 1 John tells

us that if we are continually living a sinful pattern of life, then we really don't know Him. Instead of continuing in that unbroken lifestyle of sin, we confess the sin and turn from it. All Christians, even mature ones will sin, but we should always be growing in our walk with Him. There are many tests given for us to use to evaluate our lives. This book (1 John) should cause us to deepen our commitment to walking with Him. Don't move through this book quickly. Spend a lot of time thinking and meditating about what you read.

12. (About two months) Now back to the Old Testament and the first book of the Bible again, the book of Genesis. Genesis is an entirely different kind of a book. It is historical in nature. It tells of man's beginnings and where we came from. Genesis is fifty chapters long. Read a chapter a day. Genesis is an important book, but for now you only need to read it through once. You may wish to come back to it later. A basic understanding of Genesis will help you to understand what God is like, and it will also help you to understand much of the New Testament. It should be noted that we accept the historical and scientific accuracy of all of Genesis, including the first eleven chapters. Jesus Himself quoted from each of the first eleven chapters of Genesis which indicates that He Himself accepted their authenticity.

13. (About one month) Now back to the New Testament and the book of Ephesians. Ephesians is a short book with only six short chapters that are loaded with good teaching and practical instructions for life. Read a chapter a day and be ready to spend a lot of time meditating. Read through the entire book at least four times.

14. (About three months) Now for the book of Romans. Romans is sixteen chapters long. It covers essentially all the foundational truths of our faith. It is a "heavier" book than most others. Don't hurry through it. Sometimes you may wish to spend two or three days in one chapter. You should read it through at least two times. Romans gives us the foundation of truths upon which our faith is built. Essentially all the major doctrines of our faith are covered in this book. You may wish to buy a commentary to help you understand some of the passages. John MacArthur's commentary on Romans is a good one to keep handy as you read this book.

15. (About two months) The book of Proverbs is an entirely different kind of a book. Through the use of proverbs or wise sayings, Solomon, under the inspiration of God, gives advice on how to live. While some of the verses or proverbs tie in to the verse before or after it, most of the verses are individual proverbs. Proverbs covers almost every conceivable topic. You will never digest all of this book. There is simply too much there. If you have school age children, this is an excellent book to read to them. In a very natural way it allows you to discuss with them right conduct in almost every part of life. It should be noted that a proverb is a general truth about life. It is not saying that every proverb will be true one hundred percent of the time in every person's life. In Proverbs there are thirty-one chapters. Read it at least once. You may wish to read it through again.

16. (About two months) Now let's go to the books of 1 and 2 Peter. These books together have eight chapters. These are very practical books giving instruction on various aspects of our walk with God. These are not long chapters, but read just a single chapter a day and spend plenty of time thinking and meditating on the contents of each chapter. These are books that will have to be read at least three or four times through to begin to digest the contents. You will greatly benefit from the reading of these books.

17. (About two months) 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Like 1 and 2 Peter, these two books combined have eight chapters. Follow the same pattern given for 1 and 2 Peter. Read one chapter a day. Spend lots of time thinking and meditating, and stay in these two books until you have read the entire books

through at least three or four times. These books will give you a lot of hope and peace about what God has in store for us in the future.

18. (About two months) Revelation. Revelation, chapters 4-22, deal with the future. It is not easy reading and you will most likely be a little confused after reading it. Don't expect to understand it all. Read the book through once or twice. It will give you some idea of the judgment that unbelieving people will face.

Now, on your own, you can continue studying the Bible. God gave us every part of the Scripture and each part has a purpose. Studying Scripture is a lifetime pursuit and it is part of our lifetime growing process. Continue studying and applying the Word, and you will have a productive and satisfying lifetime walk with God.