

PRAYER:
Essential for a Christian



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*"In prayer it is better
to have a heart
without words than
words without a
heart."*

[John Bunyan](#)

*"Is prayer your
steering wheel or
your spare tire?"*

[Corrie ten Boom](#)

PRAYER

Introduction and Goals

► Why should we have a class on prayer?

Prayer should be the most natural, simple thing we do. Whether we are standing, sitting, kneeling, prostrate, or head bowed focusing all our devotion on addressing our heavenly Father is essential.

► Prayer is one of the most significant acts we can perform.

Who among us feels we cannot be more effective and **consistent** in the prayers we offer to the God of the universe? God's mercy and grace, which is almost beyond comprehension, grants us the extraordinary privilege of prayer. It is a great blessing to have an audience before the Sovereign of the universe; talking to the Father in Heaven.

God communicates His will to us through the His Holy Bible:

- √ His marvelous universe (Rom. 1:19-20)
- √ His word – the Bible (Psa. 19)

We communicate with Him through worship, the living sacrifice of our lives (Rom. 12) and especially through prayer.

The manner in which we pray indicates how diligent we are in our love for God. God never instructs us to engage in anything that has no purpose or value. Of all the great benefits of prayer, the greatest is spiritual growth. It takes great reverence and humility to pray with integrity, “your will be done”. **If** our reverence is **real**, we will show it by yielding to His will in every instance.

Until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to the perfect man, to the measure of the statute of the fullness of Christ: Verse 15 but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in Him who is the head Christ, Eph. 4:13 NKJV.

► If our goal is to mature in all things, then prayer will be a major part of that growth.

In these lessons, we need to grow in our understanding of the importance to

- (1) offer a biblically sound prayer that is acceptable to God
- (2) reflect God's values and His ideals in every prayer
- (3) avoid requesting our desires which do not reflect His principles
- (4) look to God's word for the perfect lessons on “how” to pray, “why” and expected results.

“and they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden,” Gen. 3:8. Adam and Eve recognizing the SOUND of God walking in the garden suggests they had heard it before, perhaps a regular conversation with God.

ACTS



A adoration - beginning our prayer with expressions of praise

Psa. 100:4-5

C confession - approaching the pure and holy Creator compelled to confess our impurity and ungodliness

Isa. 6:5

T thanksgiving - praise should naturally follow our confession because of the forgiveness granted I Thess. 5:18

S supplication - making our request known to God Phil. 4:6

◆We will study each aspect of prayer in future lessons.◆

The ultimate goal of this class is to learn to pray with persistence, fervently expressing desires that mirror God's purpose while glorifying Him. Our learning curve will be far more than learning effective ways to request our desires. We must learn to ask, seek, and desire higher things that relate to God's rule and righteousness. As we grow spiritually on our path diligently seeking God, we will realize our requests and reasons for making them are less selfish.

“O Lord, let me not henceforth desire health or life except to spend for you, with you, and in you. You alone know what is good for me, do therefore what seems best to you. Give me or take from me; conform my will to yours and grant that with humble and perfect submission and in holy confidence I may receive the orders of your eternal providence, and may equally adore all that comes to me from you.” Blaise Pascal

REFLECTING



1. Is prayer a natural action? Why or why not?
2. How do young people learn to pray?
3. What is the danger in imitating others in prayer?
4. List passages of some of the best model prayers.

5. Read the following passages. Make a brief note about how these prayers can serve as a pattern for us.

Rom. 15:30-33

Eph. 1:15-23

Eph. 3:14-21

Phil. 1:3-11

Col. 1:9-11

Col. 4:12

I Thess. 1:3-12

6. How does offering a biblically sound prayer make us more spiritual?

Special assignment: If you do not already have a formal prayer list ---please begin one today. Set aside a scheduled time every day to pray for people on your list.

PRAYER

Lesson 1

Terms and Needs

There are a number of terms that help us understand how genuinely to engage God in prayer. Communication with God is a human yearning from the beginning of history and God has fulfilled that need. The scriptures are filled with instructions and examples of this important connection with heaven yet we, like the apostles, feel inadequate with praying effectively.

1. **Pray/prayer** - the most frequent terms - Mt. 6:5-7: 9ff; 14:23; 26:36, 39, 44
√ Examine Matt. 6:6-10 to learn about the place of prayer.

2. To Ask

- √ *Erotao* - frequently suggests the petitioner is equal or familiar with the person of whom he makes the requests - John 14:14-16; 16:26; 17:9,15, 20-21, 1 John 3:22, 5:14
- √ *Aiteo* - more frequently suggests the attitude of a suppliant, (the petition of one who is less significant in position than the one to whom the petition is made – asking of God) John 11:22

As a clarification: it is significant that the Lord never used *aiteo* in the matter of making requests to the father. “The consciousness of his equal dignity, of His potent and prevailing intercession, speaks out in this, that as, often as he asks, or declares that he will ask anything of the Father, it is always *erotao*, an asking that is, upon equal terms, and never *aiteo*, that He uses. Martha, on the contrary, plainly reveals her poor unworthy conception of His son, that she ascribed that *aiteo* to Him which He never ascribed to Himself.” (Trench)

3. Supplication

- √ *deesis* – appeal, a wanting, a need, entreaty - stressing the need Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; I Tim. 2:1; 5:5; Rom. 10:1; II Cor. 1:11

4. Location

- √ *proseuche* – a place of prayer - Acts 16:13,16

5. Intercession

- √ *enteuxis* - denotes a lighting upon, meeting with; a petition, the technical term for meeting the king, approaching God in intercession – I Tim. 2:1

6. Petition

- √ *aitema* - to ask, rendered petitions - 1 John 5:15

The Need for Prayer

We need to pray because spiritual life is a relationship with a personal Being, rather than a unilateral exercise in self-discipline, obligation, and duty. Temptations are strong, many disappointments tear at our hearts, threats abundant, and failures everywhere; thus we need God's mercy and support to help us make it through life. Prayer is not to inform God but it is to acknowledge our understanding that He, not we, provides our every need. Remember without God, life is filled with evil and chaos.

(1) God will bless us even when we cannot express our needs.

"Now unto Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us," Eph. 3:20.

Remembering that God communicates blessings of His fairness, understanding, and the glory of His creation to His people, we should fulfill His desire to be praised. I Cor. 2:9 and Isa. 64:4 inform us that thoughts beyond our ability to express are from the mind of God and far surpass anything man might consider. Yet Eph. 3:19 tells of His power working within us, a concept difficult to conceive.

REFLECTING



1. What did Martha believe about the relationship between Jesus and the Father?

2. Explain the attitudes about prayer given in the following passages.

1Thess. 5:17

Luke 21:36

Rom. 12:12

I Pet. 4:7

Col. 4:2

I Tim. 2:1

PRAYER

Lesson 2

Jesus Teaching on Prayer

When we contrast man's idea of an acceptable prayer to God and the teachings of Jesus we see many differences. Jesus introduced a very new concept to the pagans and Jews; God is approachable, like a personal and loving Father. There is **no** mindless repetition, **no** formal wordy statements, or no showmanship. Jesus ALWAYS spoke in the humblest terms expressing His needs and giving thanks, providing the complete and proper example.

Jesus ALWAYS took time to pray! Prayer was an absolute necessity in His life. Being the son of God who came from heaven and would one day return, He was also completely human. He suffered every temptation that man suffers, He endured and overcame far more than any other human (Heb. 4:15). It was not because of His divinity but because of His relationship with God that gave Him the strength to remain sinless.

Motivation for our Prayers

When Jesus examined the Pharisees' pray in Matt. 6:5-6 and 23:14, He did not condemn praying in public. However, He was critical of turning their private petition into a public show. Jesus often prayed in public, (John 11:41-43; Matt. 26:26-27) as did the early Christians (Acts 4:24ff) and Paul (I Cor. 14:15-17). His criticism was their inner desire to impress others with pioussness and to display their prayers for praise and adulation. God has no desire to be used in that fashion. No one is more spiritually bankrupt than the person who needs to pray but does not know how to approach God. Equally bankrupt is the person who knows about prayer but does not feel the need to seek spiritual help. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray; perhaps we should include, "motivate us to pray," in personal prayers.

Proper Expression in Prayer

Jesus drew a lesson from the Pharisee hypocrite, now He looks at the heathen in Matt. 6:7-8. Believing the volume of words is important he repeats the same idea in different phrases, thoughts, and sentiments. Sometimes prayers in denominational gatherings are read coldly from prayer books: Catholics recite the rosary:

"The devotion of the Fifteen Mysteries in which fifteen 'decades' of Ave Marias' are recited, each decade being proceeded by the Paternoster and followed by the Gloria Patri. Ordinarily only a third part of the Rosary, a so-called chaplet, is said on one occasion. To assist in memory, the prayers are commonly counted on a string of beads." (Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church)

God is aware of everything; He is not like a distracted parent who must be hounded or driven to irritation to take notice. Remember the story of Elijah in I Kings 18. Jesus taught His disciples how to pray giving an example of appropriate, although not comprehensive, content expressed with simplicity of expression (Matt. 6:9-13). This was intended to be instructive in nature not just something to be recited at a gathering or ceremony. Let us examine the model pray recorded in Matt. 6:9-13.

◆ **Our** - Jesus begins His prayer with this small word. It confines the prayer to a select group, not the whole world. The word “**Our**” corrects the misconception of *universal fatherhood and the brotherhood of Man* because of creation. Man does not approach God because of creation but because of His relationship with man. The word “**Our**” emphasizes the community of believers, brothers with Christ, (Rom. 8:16-17) illustrating the privileges, blessings, and responsibility of those disciples who have accepted the Lord.

◆ **Father** - All the best qualities of sacrifice, love, and devotion are found in “Our Father.” The meaning behind the phrase gives us comfort and hope because the power of our Father is accompanied by equal knowledge of our needs and us. It is not to inform Him rather acknowledge and recognize Him as the Lord of our needs. (Matt. 6:32)

◆ **In Heaven** – This gives us a close look at His holiness while remaining approachable. James 4:8 encourages us to, “draw near to Him.”

◆ **Hallowed be thy name** - Holiness is who God is. We should pray for understanding of His nature as taught in the scriptures (Isa. 6:3, 55:8-9, Ex. 15:11, Rev. 15:4). The inhabitants of heaven are keenly aware of God’s holiness and never cease to praise Him (Rev. 3:8). In Num. 20:12 God explains His relationship with man. Reflect on the proper attitude we should take when we are,” on holy ground,” (Ex. 3:5).

The results of reverence for God are recognizing the awesome power, knowledge, and wisdom our Father possesses. The awareness of the presence of a righteous God reveals our sins and inadequacies. Sin is an offense against a holy, righteous, and just God (Psa. 51:4, Isa. 6:5, Luke 5:8).

Understanding the holiness of God gives prayer a new and different meaning. In His majesty and holiness, He is not only ready and willing to hear us; He is even anxious for us to ask. This means we can come to Him with a heart of loving gratitude. Holiness is a lifelong quest as we strive to acquire the God like quality (I Pet. 1:16).

◆ **Thy Kingdom Come** - As Jesus teaches the sample prayer the kingdom as prophesied in Daniel 2 has not been established. The re-establishment of the throne of David and universal rule delegated to Christ by virtue of His atoning work, has not yet occurred in Matt. 6. Yet, Jesus teaches faith and hope that His kingdom WILL come.

◆ **Your will be done** - Look at the progression of thought. Jesus began by addressing God, the place where all prayers must begin, and then He called us to a better understanding of God’s nature. Next, He comes to the control of our lives. Only when we completely submit ourselves to Him can we continue to pray, “Thy will be done.”

◆ **On earth as it is in Heaven** - God's will is always perfectly done in Heaven, Rev. 20. John saw beasts, elders and an innumerable multitude waiting to praise, glorify and do God's bidding. God desires the same thing in His church. If we remove our selfish ambitions and pretensions, many difficulties and hindrances will be eliminated in the church. The closer the church is to putting God's will first, the closer it is to being a little like heaven. The greater our understanding of God's will, the more meaningful our prayers will be. Prayer is seeking God's will and praising Him for His majesty, wisdom, and power.

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

REFLECTING



1. What reward do men who pray publicly want to receive from people?
2. When we offer private prayers, how does God reward a genuine prayer?
3. Explain holiness.
4. What changes happened in the life of Peter when he became aware of the nature of God?
5. List and discuss the first three requests in the model prayer.

6. Discuss the moral and spiritual problems if we always get our way.

7. What causes most church difficulties: failure to understand God's will or an unwillingness to do God's will? Explain.

PRAYER
Lesson 3
Attitudes

A proper attitude is not inherent; we learn and developed it over time. It is a way of thinking or feeling, defined as “posture, position assumed or studied to serve a purpose.” One can compare attitude to disposition, outlook, or approach one manifests. Although the word “attitude” cannot be found in the scriptures, most Christian principles involve this characteristic, such as the beatitudes in Matt. 5. Proper attitude toward prayer is of utmost importance.

In Acts 2:42 we see that the early Christians “continued steadfastly in . . .prayer.” They were developing a relationship with God; they had a desire to talk to Him. Prayer is the very breath of a Christian. To a person with little or no faith, prayer is just empty words holding no expectation of an answer; like a tree falling in the woods. However, to a person of faith, prayer is an address to the Creator who has the power to respond. The Father’s desire is for His children to come to Him with petitions, supplications, and requests. *Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God, Phil. 4:6.*

A proper attitude governs our actions in all we do. Without it, we can never experience the joys of Christ’s kingdom. Many people are indifferent, murmur, and lack the joy of being in a proper relationship with God. A poor attitude will take away the great blessing of approaching the throne of God in prayer with the assurance and expectation of an answer.

Throughout the New Testament, we can see the effects of prayer in the lives of early Christians. In Acts 4:23-31 when Peter and John were threatened by the Jewish council they, “*lifted up their voice to God with one accord.*” Why? They held the expectation that God would help in time of need. When Herod held Peter in prison Acts 12:5 says, “*Prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him.*”

When Paul ended his speech to the Ephesian elders, “*he kneeled down, and prayed with them all,* Acts 20:36. This use of prayer was to benefit, support, and lift up others in a mutual pursuit of a common goal.

One of the greatest examples of humility and forgiveness is recorded in Acts 7:60, *then he fell on his knees and cried out; “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”* While Jews are throwing stones, Stephen uses the avenue of prayer to ask God to release his persecutors of their responsibility for taking his life. Jesus prayed the same prayer while hanging on the cross, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,*” Luke 23:34.

The emotionally filled scene in Acts 21:1-5 shows the local Christians pleading with Paul to cancel his plans to return to Jerusalem. They feared for his life, not expecting to see him again. The proper attitude of prayer is plainly seen as they gathered on the beach to bid farewell after Paul had spent a week with them. The prayer was one of strong emotion for this soldier of the cross, mentor, friend, and of God.

In many of Paul’s epistles, he urges us to maintain a proper attitude about prayer:
Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, Romans 12:12 (NAS95).

Examine carefully the attitude expressed in this verse:

Rejoice in hope - motivation for being patient in tribulation	
Devoted to prayer	} the amount of time spent in prayer
Constant in prayer	
Steadfast in prayer	
Preserving	

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving, Colossians 4:2 (NAS95). Morning is a great time to converse with God in prayer; the mind is fresh from a night of rest under God’s protective care and thoughts are clear before we engage in the activities of the day. We need His pardon and mercy before we face the trials and problems of daily living in this old sinful world. Remember, *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,* Psalms 42:1-2 (NAS95.) David describes the relationship we must have with God to live faithfully.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, Ephesians 6:18 (NAS95). This verse follows the description of spiritual armor that fully equips us to battle the powers of darkness. Paul adds the need to pray, “with all prayer,” – a variety of prayers; public, private, family, or closet. We cannot fight with prayer alone. However, we are to watch and be on guard against the enemies of the Lord, doing so with diligence, perseverance, and determination. *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God,* Philippians 4:6 (NAS9). It has been said, “prayer is the tranquilizer for Christians.”

As our example, Paul used the word of God and prayer as his “weapons of choice” throughout his long life in service to God. How can we *survive* without following his example? Read II Cor. 11:22-27, then consider the number of times Paul prayed for strength, courage and determination to remain faithful during his trials. There are few other places to look for strong examples for us to use than these passages.

Consider the teachings of these passages.	
	Be righteous – right with God – I Peter 3:12, James 5:16, Isa. 1:15, 59: 1-2, John 9:31, Psa. 66:18
	Keep God’s commandments – I John 3:22, Prov. 28:9
	Pray in Jesus’ name – John 14: 13-14, Col. 3:17
	Have a forgiving Spirit – Matt. 6: 14-15, Luke 23: 34
	Pray with the right motive – James 4:3, Matt. 6: 5-8

REFLECTING



Questions

15. How do we develop a proper attitude?
2. What is the value of a proper attitude?
3. List three passages in the New Testament where we can see the effects of prayer.
4. How can we use the example of Stephen in our prayer life?
5. Explain the meaning of “devoted.”
6. Compare I Kings 15:3 to Rom. 12:10. What lesson can be learned from these passages?
7. What did the New Testament Christians use as their “weapon of choice”? Explain why.

PRAYER
Lesson 4
Prayer of Faith

Prayer is a **conversation** with God which grows out of a living and vibrant **relationship**. Prayer must be based on *faith in God* and our confidence that He is **the** powerful, benevolent, and attentive heavenly Father He claims to be. He is the I AM. He must be REAL to us.

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us, I John 5:14 (NAS95).

This confidence or boldness that we can have is in HIM. One of the effects of believing in Jesus Christ is the assurance our prayers will be answered (I John 5:13). Asking according to His will is a proper and necessary limitation in all prayers. God never promised nor should we expect anything that would be contrary to His will. The all-knowing God judges what is best for us.

God's will grants

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| > Forgiveness of sins | Matt. 26:28 |
| > Sanctification of soul | I Thess. 1:3 |
| > Comfort in time of trials | II Peter 2:9 |
| > Basic needs | Phil. 4:19 |
| > Courage to do our duty | Deut. 31:6 |
| > Wisdom to guide us | James 1:5 |
| > Final salvation | Rev. 2:10 |

Because God presides over all creation, we should not ask for anything that would not be good for mankind.

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, I John 5:15 (NAS95.) We must have this even when we do not immediately see the prayer answered, knowing God's has our best interest (Luke 22:42, II Cor. 12:8-9).

Prayer must be in connection with a future event: restoration of health, safety in travel, or the safe return for someone else and we should not expect an immediate answer. We may not see the answer for several reasons:

- ◆ it might require a miracle
- ◆ it may not be consistent with the will of God
- ◆ Perhaps it is a trial of faith to determine if we earnestly desire the request
- ◆ our spiritual condition may not allow God to answer at once. We may need further strengthening by trial, to ensure we are ready to receive the blessing

It is possible that God has something better in mind for our good that will delay the answer for a long time.

Our firmest assurance must be that our prayer has been heard and it will be answered in the way and at the time God sees fit.

We must live life following God's will which gives us an approving conscience, faithfully keeping His commandments, without murmuring, this gives us the confidence[boldness] before God. Not haughty nor arrogant as if we deserve the request we have made, but the confidence comes from our gracious heavenly Father, who accepts us as pardoned sinners, I John 3:21 (NAS95).

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight, I John 3:22 (NAS95). We establish a relationship with God by keeping His commandments. He takes pleasure in showing grace to His obedient and dutiful children.

This is His commandment that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us, I John 3:23 (NAS95). The commandment of relationships is the very foundation of all true obedience.

Believe on the name of His son Jesus Christ – Acts 16:31

Love one another – John 13: 36

The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us, I John 3:24 (NAS95). This is the evidence that we belong to Christ (John 15). The proof is the promise that He abides in us through the spirit and we in Him. To understand how the effects produced by the spirit live in our hearts, examine Gal. 5:22-25.

Read James 1:1-8 for the context of James 1:5, *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.* We need this kind of wisdom to bear the trials, difficulties, and disappointments that come our way. By possessing this wisdom, we can perform our duties and learn the lessons God is teaching us. One of the privileges of being a faithful Christian is not only seeking general wisdom but also asking for guidance when we encounter an emergency, a perplexing problem, or difficulty. He permits us to come freely before Him and He will give generously.

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 1:6 (NAS95). When we approach the throne of God, it MUST be without doubt. Unlike the waves of the sea, which are unstable at the mercy of the wind, we are to be unwavering. When we come before the Lord, our convictions and hopes must be settled, “lest we be moved around by every new feeling.” Having hope and yet fearing failure of obtaining God’s favor leaves one restless and confused.

For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, James 1:7 (NAS95). The unstable man has no **real** trust in God, no reliance on His grace, promises should not expect anything from God---no **real** relationship, and it is only superficial.

Being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, James 1:8 (NAS95). Double-minded literally means two minds or two ways of thinking. This one is not settled on godly principles, yet controlled by the passion of the day. They are always changing, influenced by popular feelings that are the source of the instability.

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him, Matthew 7:11 (NAS95).

Because we are encouraged by God to seek Him and cast all our cares on Him, for *He cares for us*, I Pet. 5:7, we naturally question the effectiveness of prayer. This topic will be explored more fully in the next lesson, but let us consider the frame of mind of those who approach God in prayer.

As a Christian matures his prayer progresses from an occasional cry for help to an ongoing dialog with his Heavenly Father. Our awareness of dependence on God becomes daily rather than at times of crisis. ALL our thoughts are examined through the light of God’s oversight: the blessings we receive and enjoy in the acknowledgment that they are from God. This is the process of spiritual growth.

REFLECTING



Questions

1. Reflect on the meaning of prayer in your life.
2. Explain the meaning of I John 5:14.
3. Why can we have confidence in God?
4. What are we commanded to believe? Consider I John 3:23 when explaining why this is important.

5. Have you ever prayed for wisdom? How did God answered?

6. Why might some people not ask God for wisdom?

7. How can a man who prays for wisdom help himself attain it?

8. In what way does doubt affect our prayers?

PRAYER
Lesson 5
Prayer of A Righteous Man

Our faith in God lies not just in the fact that He exists or even hears: faith understands that God can be reasoned with and influenced within limitations. *The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much*, James 5:16 NAS. Faith and righteousness go hand and hand because every man completely devoted to God is striving to attain godly character. The word “righteous” is used 45 times and “righteousness” 87 times in the New Testament showing us God’s desire for His children.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

James 5:16 NASV

“*Confess your faults [sins] to one another,*” follows Verse 15 that speaks on the same subject. James states that if a man has committed sins they will be forgiven through repentance, confession, and prayer. As we pray one for another, we seek the healing power of God on both the body and the soul.

Effective	producing the desired results
Fervent	intense zeal
Prayer	beseeching God
Righteous Man	right with God

Some translators suggest that a better word for “effective” would be “energetic” because the word properly refers to that which produces power. The kind of prayer referred to here is not one that is indifferent, cold, repetitious, or lifeless but one with vitality, earnest, sincerity, and perseverance. The success of this prayer depends on the righteousness of the man who offers it. Pray with a humble attitude, fervently, and earnestly while petitioning God for His favor. The prayer must also reflect God’s will and His plans for the world.

Rules for Praying for the Sick

Rule 1 - Sickness and death are normal parts of everyday life. We grow closer to death with each passing day as soon as we are born. We must recognize the frailties of life, the temporary nature of time here on earth (Pas. 90:10), and that it is nothing more than a period of preparation for eternity.

Rule 2 - Some sickness is directly related to sin (Psa. 37-38) such as addiction to drugs, alcoholism, sexual sins, etc.

Rule 3 - Not all sickness has a connection to sin, as with diseases such as cancer.

Rule 4 - It may not be in keeping with God's will that a person be healed.

Rule 5 - When healing happens it is an act of mercy. Phil. 2:25-27, Matt. 9:30, 15:22, 17:15

*God looks at us * Sees misery * Has Compassion

Rule 6 - Nothing is too hard for God, Duet.29:29.

Righteousness

The apostle Paul uses Romans 6:11-18 to illustrate righteous as "rightness with God," no schism between that man and God. We can have harmony and unity because of the forgiveness of our sins.

Romans 1:16-17 reveals God's great power and most importantly the expression of God's love for humankind by providing the means of salvation while being true to Himself (Rom 3:26).

The text passages of Romans 6:11-18 begins by showing the spiritual condition of an obedient disciple of Christ:

Vs.11- dead to sin-alive to Christ

Vs. 15 - shall we sin - certainly not

Vs. 12 - no reigning sin

Vs. 16 - death vs righteousness

Vs. 13 - present yourselves to God

Vs. 17-obeyed for the heart

Vs. 14- no dominion

Vs. 18-freedom to become a slave

REFLECTING



Questions

1. Describe, in a few words, the context of James 5:13-18.
2. For what do we most often pray?
3. What are the key components of James 5:16?
Other passages to consider: Eph. 4:16, 1 Pet. 4:8, Rom. 12:11
4. What is the purpose of referring to Elijah in James 5:17?

5. How does Romans 6: 11 - 18 apply to prayer?

6. Why does Paul often use “not-but” as a teaching method?

7. What is the practical application of Romans 6:16?

8. Examine these passages to add to the discussion of the prayer of the righteous.

Matt. 5:5, Eph. 4:24, Heb. 5:13, I Tim. 6:11, II Tim. 2:22, I John 3:7, 10

PRAYER
Lesson 6
The Will of God
&
Answering Prayers

*Be aware of this principle
when considering answered
prayer*

*One's relationship with God
does not obligate God to the
believer's will ...*

The believer's will is **always** subordinate to the sovereign will of God. God's promise to answer prayer is **always** balanced with the sovereignty of His will. We **must** learn to make our plans while basing our intentions upon the over-arching will of God. God's purposes are supreme and we must seek to match our lives with God's revealed purpose.

Examine the emphasis on God's will:

James 4:15 - *Instead I should say, If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.*

I Cor. 4:19 - *But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills.....* (Acts 18:21, Heb.6:3)

I Peter.3:17; 4:19 - God's will may allow for some suffering.

Heb.10:7, 9 - *come to do the will of God*

I. God's Condition on Prayer

Jesus recognized God's condition three times, as He prayed at the pinnacle of His need before the cross (Matt. 26:39, 42, and 44). In each of the verses He ended His petition to His Father with, "*your will be done*". These heart-felt words should always be ours.

We can be assured of three facts:

- (1) Our Father has the ability to hear all our prayers
- (2) He answers the prayers of all His children
- (3) "No" is also an answer.

God has promised to hear our prayers - *This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us,* I John 5:14 (NAS95). The will of God has set limits and we cannot effectively pray in violation of those limits.

If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this, I John 5:16 (NAS95).

It would be a violation to pray for God to save people who are in rebellion to Him because our desire will not reflect God's will.

II. Obedience

... and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight, I John 3:22 (NAS95). Keeping His commandments equates with “walking in the light” (1:7) and “abiding in the light” (2:10). This is called, “knowing God” (2:3), those in a covenant relationship with God have the assurance of answered prayers.

John 15:1-11 is a great commentary on our relationship with Jesus Christ and the God of heaven. The physical illustration of a grape vine, the branches, and the relationship they share is easily understood. However, applying this illustration to our spiritual relationship with the Creator of the universe is much more difficult. We lack boldness and assurance to image that picture in our minds. This is not a parable; it is an illustration of how Jesus views every Christian's relationship with Him and the Father. The difficulty is with us! Verse 4 reminds us, *Abide in Me and I in you.*

III. Proper motives - *You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures,* James 4:2 & 3 (NAS95). The people in these verses were so determined to satisfy their own lust and desires they were willing to forfeit prayer on the altar of ambition believing themselves to be wise and shrewd. Others asked but did so for selfish indulgence. Such an attitude makes one an enemy of God, a spiritual adulterer. (James 4:4)

The proper way to obtain anything that we really need is to seek it from God and then use every just and right means to obtain it, by honesty and diligent work.

IV. Deeper desire - *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 (NAS95).* When we feel our requests to God are not answered the result should lead us to seek Him more fervently, with great reverence and humility. We do not need to jump to foolish conclusions about God himself. God may answer our prayers very differently than we had hoped, in ways we never imagined. When that happens, it is a lesson learned about the goodness of God. In Luke 18 Jesus is NOT teaching us we must pester God until He answers our requests but that God is looking for persistent faith that produces persistent prayers. Letting the Lord decide what is best should not be something we do reluctantly or grudgingly but with humility. The delay may be to prepare our hearts to be ready to receive the answer. We often have a lack of understanding about the value of God's mercy to enjoy completely the good things God is able to do for us. (Eph. 3:20)

V. Beneficial: The New Testament emphasizes God’s “good gifts” (James 1:17, Matt. 7: 11). Sometimes what *we* determine to be beneficial, God sees as a disaster. As human fathers, we withhold dangerous things from a child; God also governs what He provides for us. Defer to His judgment!

Not all these conditions promise an answered prayer but they are always operating as we make our requests to God.



We need to consider the following verses. God’s promises are NEVER open-ended unqualified promises where God’s will is subject to ours. Prayer is not a heavenly credit card for an earthly shopping spree.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you, Matthew 7:7 (NAS95). Jesus spoke this verse to predominantly Jews who had been led away from God’s word to follow the Rabbi’s traditions, even to a point of being demoralized and disillusioned. Jesus is trying to instill a new hope and confidence in God and He does so by reintroducing them to a caring and loving Father. Consider Matt. 6: 25-34.

Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be taken up and cast into the sea, “and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore, I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you, Mark 11:23-24 (NAS95).

Peter had witnessed many amazing things Jesus had done including walking on the water yet, he does not understand the withered fig tree. Jesus speaks to His disciples who are “uncertain” in faith saying, “Have faith in God” (Mark 11:22). Jesus will soon give them the “Great Commission” to preach the gospel to all nations and they will NOT complete this relying on their own strength. Jesus is offering a source of strength that will sustain them successfully through the remainder of their lives.

Conclusion

God answers prayers – make a personal review of your life. A vast majority have been answered affirmatively. Even when answered in the negative, it is always for our benefit.

REFLECTING



1. What should we pray for when someone is in rebellion to God?
2. Explain the term, “covenant relationship?”
3. Prov. 1, Isa. 1, Jer. 11, Micah 3, and Zech. 7 state, “God will not listen,” explain why.
4. Contrast I John 5: 14 with the verses in # 3.
5. Explain how John 9: 31 is relevant to this discussion.
6. List two things **we** would consider, “good gifts,” that **God** would consider dangerous and explain why.

PRAYER
Lesson 7
Personal Prayer

The more our faith grows the more central God and our dependence on Him becomes part of our conscious thoughts. Consider Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians, “rejoice and pray because the Lord is at hand,” Phil. 4:5. He is near to us although He is invisible. A simple prayer is very personally and intimate. A time reserved for you to make known your desire to praise God, without any interference or intrusion. It is a time between you and your Father. Prayer deals with the heart. Without heart-involvement, it cannot be considered prayer; it is just empty words without substance.

I. When Should We Pray?

I Thess. 5:17 instructs us to, “pray without ceasing.” We are not to participate in needless reciting of words however; prayer is to be a constant part of life. Circumstances will determine the length of a prayer. For example, in Acts 7:59 Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus receive my spirit.” By comparison, Jesus prayed all night before His betrayal. As we face challenges ask the Father to help the appropriate words to come to mind for any situation. These thoughts are not life preserver prayers but just the opposite, the opportunity for an intimate conversation with our Father.

Without ceasing – Rom. 1:9	Night and day praying exceedingly – I Thess. 3: 9 – 10
Do not cease – Eph. 1: 15 – 16	Always for you – I Thess. 1:3
Always in every prayer – Phil 1: 3 – 4	Without ceasing, night & day – I Tim. 1:3
Do not cease – Col. 1:9	Always – Philemon 4
Always – I Thess. 1:2	Many of Paul’s prayers were for others. Although we gain many benefits from praying for personal concerns, never forget intercession for others.
Without ceasing – I Thess. 2: 13	

II. Paul’s Framework for Prayer

Our prayers should be simple, direct, and to the point. It becomes harder for us to concentrate when we use repetition and too many words. It will eventually become noise to God’s ears (Matt. 6:7).

The foundation of Paul's prayer in II Thess. 1: 1 – 12 helps in understating the specifics of his content. The prayer begins in verse 11, "*to this end also we pray for you always,*" but verses 3 – 10 provide the framework for his thoughts.



III. The Need for Prayer

We have been conditioned, by habit, to pray before meals but we err if that is the primary communication with God. God is needed every moment of every day to help us keep our thoughts pure, to speak with wisdom, requesting love which sustains us, and protection from harm. Our growing and developing relationship with Him should make it easy to speak often and remain reverent at all 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. (Colossian 1:9).

The Colossians had made good progress and he sought to encourage them to greater spiritual heights. It was stimulating and encouraging to Paul to pray for those who were doing well. His prayer continued in verse 10, *that they would walk worthy of the Lord*. Then he explains how that can be accomplished: by increasing in knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding leads to being fruitful in His kingdom. Verse 11, the object of Paul's prayer, encourages them to *strengthen with all might*, to meet temptations, to perform the duties of a Christian and to stand strong under the trails of life.

There will be times in every Christian's life when prayers will be more intense and urgent because of circumstances. Those with a close communion with God will best meet every crisis.

IV. Jesus, His Example of Prayer

Jesus exemplifies our need to pray and the discipline to make time for prayer in the midst of hectic, busy lives.

Jesus also exemplifies a person living prayerful. We should have God in our minds as we go throughout our daily routines, being mindful of Him in a general way, living consciously in the presence of God. Each moment we are to be aware of His reality. This will be hard at first, simply because our minds are not disciplined however, with serious intent we will train our minds by the discipline acquired in living a spiritual life. He becomes our preoccupation. Spring flowers, a rainbow, and fall colors can serve as prompts to remind us of God's presence.

Paul's suggestion for mental thoughts are recorded in Philippians 4:8, *Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*

REFLECTING



1. What is your greatest shortcoming in your prayer life?
2. Explain the application of Phil. 4:5 to prayer.
3. Give three passages that give examples of when to pray.
4. After examining the following passages explain the theme. Rom. 1:9, Eph. 1:15, Phil. 1: 3-4, Col. 3:9, I Thess. 1:2, 12, 2:13, 3: 9 - 10
5. List three things Paul included in his prayers. Would you consider these spiritual or material? Explain.
6. What causes distractions while praying?

PRAYER

Lesson 8

Excuses

The very essence of prayer is the spirit of devotion. Without devotion, prayer is empty, a vain round of words. This is a busy, active age; this bustling spirit has invaded the church. The church services should be conducted with order, with a machine-like precision to decrease distractions. However, too often it works with the heartlessness of a machine. There is much of the treadmill movement in our ceaseless rounds and routine of religious activities. We pray without praying, we sing without singing in the spirit and the understanding.

Let's consider some excuses made for not praying; things that prevent us from approaching God in a prayerful state of mind.

I. Time Constraints

We are in such a hurry, always busy. From the time our eyes open until we settle in for the night there is a beehive of activity. We rush here, dash there, with our studies, work, striving to finish the projects before us. Finally, the day is over and we are ready to collapse into a soft chair or prepare for bed. Where does prayer fit in a day like that? Many of us try to pray in the morning, before the day gets crazy, or in the evening, once the busy day is over. We stay up too late and then cannot get up early enough the next morning or we wear ourselves out during the day and cannot stay up long enough to get halfway through a prayer.

We promise the Lord and ourselves that once things slow down we will do better and devote more time to prayer. However, will that day ever come?

II. Too Spiritually Dry

There may be times when we come to the throne of God in prayer, having set aside the time and devoted the energy, but just do not feel like praying. This may come from discouragement, stress, depression, periods of weak faith, or a general feeling of emptiness. The circumstances around us are usually the cause. Remember – success is determined by how we react to any circumstance we face. The first step is to identify triggers that cause the problems then deal directly with them. Begin with overcoming self, humbling yourself before the throne of God in prayer.

III. Unnecessary

This excuse is a little trickier to detect because few of us are truly willing to admit this feeling. We are not arrogant enough to say I don't need to pray because I am too strong, mature and independent. This prospective may be more prevalent in our lives than we want to admit. When are we most prayerful? When are we most consistent in our prayer-life? When life is good? When all the bills are paid? When we have no health problems? When we are having just a few minor problems or temptations? **NO**, how often do we treat God like a life preserver? Or a spare tire that remains in the trunk until we need it? (Judges 17:9)

IV. Too Bitter

Injustice is everywhere about us in this life. Others often treat us unfairly. It may be hateful words, false judgments, malicious gossip, or being ignored completely. Admit it; it all hurts, especially when the hurt comes from those closest to us. Revenge is sweet, malice fills the heart, and we feed on it because it makes us feel better in the short time. However, there are many serious physical side effects; loss of energy, loss of hair, death. It sounds like a commercial for some drug. The loss of prayerfulness that can lead to death is an ever-present dangerous side effect. How can we approach God when our hearts are filled with anger? We may even try to justify our actions and ask God to curse our enemies. However, usually we just do not pray! We know God does not approve of our thoughts in our state of self-pity and resentment; we just cannot bring ourselves to pray for the very people against whom we feel so bitter. Matt. 5:44 & Rom. 12:20

V. To Ashamed

After Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, they heard God walking in the garden. They hid themselves because they were ashamed of being naked. Shame makes us want to hide from the presence of God today. We try to hide from God when we are aware of sin in our own lives. Consider – how can we pray to God the Father if we are hiding from Him? Jonah determined to flee from the presence of God (Jonah 1:3). He finally came to his senses in the belly of a great fish and turned to God in prayer.

VI. Content with Mediocrity

THIS IS THE MOST DANGEROUS! When we become content we cling to the truth and out of that can grow spiritual pride. We cling to our superior mortality. We are in the pews three times a week, tithing all we possess (Luke 18:10 – 12). This confidence is not based on grace. It is in our foolish assumption that we have arrived. We feel we are *rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing and do not realize that we are actually, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*, (Rev. 3:18).

Suggestions to Help Us Pray

Develop a prayer list – To avoid not being sure who to pray for, keep a list and add to the list as you learn of those in need.

Set specific times to pray - If we wait until we have time we will never pray. Time is a rare commodity and seems to get away quickly.

Phone as an aide – Use this convenience to reach shut-ins and check on the sick. This builds your prayer list and provides specifics to add to your prayer.

Turn off electronic devices – These can become very distracting causing us to lose focus. Spend more time in bible study and prayer



APPLICATION

Use the church directory and thank God for each individual; their faith, example, growth, patience, love and knowledge. Through this process, you can satisfy James 5: 16 and II Thess. 3:1. You will also be assisting all the members of your spiritual family. You will discover there are some members you do not know well enough to understand their needs. You can remedy the situation by being better acquainted with them. Remember; *love one another with kindly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor*, (Rom. 12:10).

**Prayer is not a
substitute for actions.**

REFLECTING



1. What is your greatest shortcoming in your prayer life?
2. How can you improve your shortcomings?
3. Give yourself a test in honesty and truth. Try praying something like this prayer:

Dear Father, help me see myself as you do. Give me friends who love my soul in the long run more than they have my goodwill in the short run, friends who will not let me ignore or excuse my sins. Set me in the midst of circumstances that will make me see MY true character. Bring out into the open sunshine of Your truth every fault that I have hidden from myself. Expose my secrets to others, if that is what it takes, and help me, in Your strength and love, to be glad for the honesty this forces upon me. Help me to accept even the most unwelcome truth about who I

PRAYER
Lesson 9
Public Worship

Most of the previous lessons have focused on private, individual prayers. This lesson will delve into the great value of joining our hearts and thought together in prayer as the family of God. As our personal prayers are to be sound in principle and sincere in attitude for God to hear and respond, so should public prayers.

I. The “Who”

While the thoughts of the pray are expressed by one man, each individual is to concentrate on the words and express agreement with an “amen.” Men and women possess equal status, with equal access to God.

Paul directs male leadership in prayer (I Tim. 2:8) and this is consistent with other teachings on the roles of male and females during worship services. It is a privilege to lead brethren in prayer, even though the leader has no special spiritual standing. God hears the silent prayers of the members of the audience equally with the leader. In an assembly of women and non-Christian males, it is spiritually appropriate for a Christian to lead prayer. There is no age limit on who leads however, wisdom, experience, and maturity must be considered to fully address the congregation’s expressions to God.

II. The “What”

The legitimate interest and concerns of the local church and the individual members should be included in a public prayer. Below are general guidelines designed to present a prayer of significance for the legitimate concerns of the congregation. We must never trivialize prayer by including petty or incognizance matters.

► Praise for God as Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of Life

Ephesians 3: 14 – 21 lists the things Paul is asking God to provide

- * Riches of His glory
- * Strengthened with power in the inner man
- * Dwelling place for Christ in the heart

- * Ability to comprehend Christ’s love
- * To know the love of Christ
- * To be filled with the fullness of

► Physical Welfare: Daily Necessities

Jesus taught His disciples to pray in Matt. 6:11 “Give us this day our daily bread.” One of the most basic needs mankind faces every day is nourishment. We need to recognize that God is the source of the bread. *And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus*, Phil. 4:19. Jesus came to provide the spiritual needs of mankind however, He also understood that man’s physical needs had to be fulfilled. The promised “bread” is more than something to eat. Our food should be taken with gratitude and to give glory to the Giver of all good gifts. *When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you*, Psa. 128:2).

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. Eph. 3: 14 & 15

Paul began his prayer in humility, bowing before the Lord, preparing to receive all God would supply to all who love and obey Him.

► Restoring Health

Is any among you afflicted? James 5:13. Whether by sickness, bereavement, disappointment, persecutions, loss of health or property, the next step is fervent prayer.

► Spiritual Soundness of the Local church

We need to pray for effective leadership and boldness of preachers and elders. Paul requests the prayers of brethren for help and support to boldly present the gospel without hesitation (Eph. 6: 19-20, Phil. 1:7, 13-14, 20).

► Growth in Knowledge

*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*, Col.1: 9 – 10. Other passages and examples of such prayers for knowledge : I Thess. 2:12, 4:1, Eph. 1: 16-18.

► Opened Doors for Evangelism

*Praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a **door for the word**, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned*, II Thess. 3:1, II Cor. 5:20.

▶ Government

We can pray that our government function properly to provide peace, justice and protection. Paul used his Roman citizenship for the cause of Christ.

▶ Collective Forgiveness of Sins

The prayer leader can request forgiveness; however, it must be sought individually.

III. The “How”

In all the instructions and examples, God never gave any particular prayer language. Because prayer is a conversation with God, we should talk to Him. Prayer is not a public performance to impress the audience; it does not require a change in tone or vocabulary. In times past, many men would use the phraseology of the King James Version but it is not common at present. A well thought out prayer will eliminate most of the repetitious and meaningless phrases that hinder the sincere expression invested in our communication with God the Father. God is real and we need to speak with Him as a real being while maintaining reverence and respect.

Avoid broad sweeping generalities such as praying for “all those who it is our duty to pray for.” Include specific names and problems to show love and compassion beyond our “duty.”

Remember the gospel preachers we support, some in very difficult places and situations. Include their families who face the hardships and those who are away from their families.

Public prayers are not just an act of worship that happens at some appointed times in the worship but a real communication with the Creator of the universe. Prayer is a great power and privilege that must be taken very seriously, expressed with wisdom, and exercised with confidence.

REFLECTING



1. Who is to lead public prayer during worship services?
2. List topics that are appropriate for a public prayer.
3. Give specific examples of how a leader should pray.
4. Explain the meaning of praying in “Jesus’ name.”
5. What is the correct posture to make a prayer acceptable?
6. How can we improve the acceptance of our public prayers?

PRAYER
Lesson 10
How to Pray

One of the most identifiable marks of a strong Christian is the intimate relationship with God through daily prayer and being immersed in God's word. We can easily see, and must emulate, the strong attributes of Jesus' prayer life. He demonstrated a deep, fervent communion with God in prayer. *In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered,* (Heb. 5: 7 – 8) NAS95). As our perfect example, Christ learned obedience by the things He suffered; we too must expect to follow that pattern.

**To be spiritually successful
prayer MUST be top**

I. Prayer Defined

- A. "Prayer is the effort of man to reach God, to commune with the invisible being, the author, and creator of all things, supreme wisdom, truth, beauty, and strength; Father and Redeemer of every man." (Unknown) – Romans 12:12
- B. "Prayer, a constant communication, the Christian's source of all power and perfection, the medium through which total intimacy with God may be reached." (Haywood) I Tim. 5:5
- C. "Pray is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the soul to God, through Christ in the strength and assistance of the spirit, for such things as God has promised." (Bunyan) – Rom. 8: 26& 27
- D. Prayer is a cry of hope. The very act of praying means that there is help on the way and is a sign the person praying believes that there is hope. - Isaiah 57: 15
- E. Prayer is the deepest form of communion and communication that God and man share. - Luke 22:44
- F. Prayers of praise are viewed by God as spiritual sacrifices. – Hebrews 12: 15 & 16
- G. Prayer is like spiritual incense ascending to God. – Revelation 8: 3 - 4

II. The Power of Prayer

A. “The most powerful force accessible to mankind is the potential of prayer.” (Miller)

B. “Answers will come, mountains will be moved, valleys will be smooth, rivers made crossable, the inaccessible made accessible, the impossible made possible, dreams come true to the person who prays.” (Miller)

C. “Prayer is the most powerful form of energy that one can generate. The influence of prayer on the human mind and body is as demonstrable as that of secreting glands. Its results can be measured in terms of increasing buoyance, greater intellectual vigor, moral stamina and a deeper understanding of human relationships. Prayer is indispensable to the fullest development personality. Only in prayer do we achieve that complete harmonious assembly of mind, body, and spirit which gives the frail human reed it unshakeable strength.” (Dr. Alexis Carrell, M.D. Nobel prizewinner for Physiology) – Psa. 32: 1-5, 51: 8 – 15

D. “The spectacle of a nation praying is more awe-inspiring than the explosion of an atomic bomb. The force of prayer is greater than any possible combination of man-made or man-controlled powers, because prayer is man’s greatest means of tapping the infinite resources of God. Invoking by prayer the mercy and might of God is the most efficacious means of guaranteeing peace and security for the harassed and helpless peoples of the earth.” (J. Edgar Hoover, former FBI Director)

III. The Blessings of Prayer

A. Offers the peace that passes understanding – Phil. 4: 6 & 7, I Tim. 5:5

B. Creates the power to overcome – Psa. 34:4, II Kings 19:14 – 20, 32 – 37, Eph. 6: 13 – 18

C. Brings one closer to God – James 4:8

D. Gives one confidence to face the unknown – Psa. 86:1

E. Nothing is impossible to those who pray.

F. No man ever fainted or faltered who gave himself to prayer.

G. Heaven comes closer, the glory grows brighter, and the hope grows more real to the one who prays. – Heb. 10:22, James 4:8

THE PERFECT PRAYER PLAN	
A. Start the day with prayer.	Mark 1: 35 – 38
B. Pray before meals.	Mark 8:6
C. Find a secluded place once a day.	Luke 5: 15 & 16
D. Pray at the end of the day.	Mark 6: 35, 46
E. Give glory to the Father.	John 17
F. Gain help through the Father.	Matt. 26: 38 – 44
H. Pray for those you love.	John 17: 9 – 17
I. Pray for your enemies.	Matt. 5:44

REFLECTING



1. Describe how we can immerse ourselves in God’s word.

2. What is meant by “communing with God”?

3. Describe Jesus' prayer life using descriptive terms.

4. Consider: we are commanded to pray (Eph. 6:18, Phil. 4: 6 & 7, I Thess. 5:17). Explain your thoughts about this command.

5. Why do people of the world recognize the power of prayer?

6. Why is prayer so powerful? (Jam. 1:5, 5: 16 & 17, I John 1:9, Rom. 8: 28 – 32, 37 – 39)

7. Seven blessings of prayer are listed in the lesson, add to the list.

PRAYER
Lesson 11
Intercessory Prayers

One aspect of godliness is the recognition and sympathy for the needs of others. The proper response is to petition God on behalf of those who are in need. Great men of faith have interceded for others throughout the scriptures, while putting their own needs aside.

ABRAHAM

Let us begin our examination of some intercessory prayers with Abraham's prayer for Lot in Genesis 18: 16 – 33. God begins by saying, "Shall I hide what I am about to do from Abraham?" These are the days of direct dialog with God and in verses 18 & 19 God takes note of the man Abraham, his children/household, and his influence. Though Sodom is an extremely wicked city, Abraham prays for its preservation. This may be out of consideration for Lot and the choice he made when separating from Abraham. God demonstrates He knows more about Sodom than Abraham does.

- Verses 20 & 21 - The outcry against Sodom comes to the Lord's attention.
- Verse 23 – Abraham begins to intercede for the righteous in Sodom.
- Verse 24, 27, 30, 32 – Notice the change in Abraham's statements as the dialog continues with God: very strong, more humble, ask for no anger, no anger asking the final time.

MOSES

Moses interceded on behalf of the Israelites on a number of occasions, Exodus 32: 30 – 35. When Moses had been on Mt. Sinai with God, Aaron and the people had made a golden calf. In verse 33 God said, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out." In today's language, God said my justice and my righteousness regulate ALL your conduct, the innocent will not suffer for the guilty, but the no one can transgress through ignorance because I have given you my law. If you transgress my law, I will blot you out of the book of life. (Romans 11:22, Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 20:15)

SAMUEL

In I Samuel 12: 16 – 25, Samuel sees the great wickedness of Israel and is greatly disappointed. Without bitterness, Samuel convicts the people of their sins and vows to pray for the hope that they will show more faith and obedience in the future. Samuel states, “Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.”

ROMANS



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 groaning too deep for words, Romans 8:26.

This verse introduces a new source of consolation and support that is part of the sustaining power for Christians. The word *helps* means to sustain, to aid and support, and should be used in dealing with our infirmities, with help to bear them, stirring us up to make a strong effort to carry whatever burden comes our way.

Paul states; we do not know how to pray ... what to pray for:

- a. We do not know what is best for us.
- b. We do not know what God is willing to grant to us.
- c. We may not fully understand the character of God, the reasons for why He deals with us and our own real needs the way He does.
- d. There are often real complex issues, surrounded by trials, exposed to temptations, feeble with sickness or disease. If left alone, we would not know how to properly ask for God's help.



In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know how we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.... Romans 8: 26 - 27

The Spirit itself, the Holy Spirit (Romans 8: 9 – 11), makes intercession – aids and assists in our prayers (which solves the problem of not knowing how to pray). “With groanings” – deep feelings and emotions too deep to be uttered (cannot be expressed in our language) but enables us to bear the burdens of life.

He does not need to express in words the deep emotions because he searches the heart, know the anxious feelings, burdens and trials and is ready to aid by making intercession for us but only in accordance with God’s will.

Because God is sovereign and He is in control, why do we pray? Why did Paul pray? The focus of Paul’s prayers is **always** in this order: God, the gospel, and how to better promote the Word. Paul prayed to God because he believed God was listening to him and He would respond.



Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen. Romans 15: 30 – 33

“Strive together with me,” – unite with me in earnest (intense effort) prayer that Paul may be delivered from the Jews. We need to pray continually for gospel preachers today, especially those in difficult places.

OTHER PASSAGES

I Thess. 5: 23 – 25 – “Brethren pray for us.” Paul was a man, subject to temptation, engaged in opposing false teachers, exposed to many perils (I Cor. 11) and was in need of prayers of the saints.

Col. 4:2 – “Continue in prayer ... praying for us that the gospel will go forth and not be hindered.”

Eph. 6:18 – “Praying always for me,” Paul desires that he would be sustained in his afflictions, that words would be given that he may speak boldly the mystery of the gospel. He calls himself an ambassador in chains, but still speaks boldly, plainly and without fear.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God, II Corinthians 5:20. We are to speak for Christ as sovereign, the message of reconciliation.

REFLECTING



48. Explain what God sees when He takes note of Abraham in Genesis 18: 18 & 19.

2. Contrast Genesis 4:10 and James 5:4 with Genesis 18: 20 & 21.

3. What is the relationship between “cry out” and “I will go down and see”?

4. Describe the logic Abraham used in reasoning with God. Consider Job 8:20.

5. What attitude does Abraham display in Genesis 18: 26?

6. List lessons we can learn from Abraham and his prayer.

7. What did Samuel do, in addition to prayer, for the Israelites?

8. What is the primary focus of Paul's prayers?

PRAYER
Lesson 12
Prayers for the Apostles

The prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17: 1, 6 – 26, gives us great insight into what is truly important to God’s people. The apostles, chosen by Christ for God’s special purpose in establishing the kingdom, are the focus of this prayer. It serves as an example of how to prayer for others.

“I pray for them. I do not pray for the world,” 17:9

Jesus has a special relationship with His people, different from the world. The verse does not suggest that Jesus was unconcerned about the lost, because His entire purpose in coming to earth was to “seek and save the lost,” Luke 19:10. He does not pray for the rebellious Jews because they had rejected Him. Jesus did ask, “Father, give them for they know not what they do,” while hanging on the cross. He has sustained a special relationship with apostles and everyone will submit to Him as Lord.

“The world hated them,” 17:11, 14 - 15

Jesus protects His followers. Just as the world hated Jesus, because of the antagonistic relationship of good and evil, it hated His apostles. Jesus prays for their protection because of the forces of evil that will be arrayed against them as they preach the gospel. We can expect nothing different when we stand for the truth today. The dangers and trials that all the apostles and early disciples faced caused their faith to be challenged (II Cor. 11), however, consider James 1: 2 - 5, “count it a joy to suffer for Christ.” Christ is glorified by the obedient lives and preaching of the apostles and identifies them as belonging to Him and the Father. In verse 15, Jesus does not ask God to remove them from the world but for protection and grace to endure the trials of the world. The world will see the power of God working in those who love and obey Him. (I Peter 1:5, John 10: 28 – 29, Jude 1:1)

“For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.” 17:19

Sanctification by truth (17: 17-19) – Jesus petitions the Father to sanctify the disciples who would become the instruments in establishing the kingdom. The word *sanctify* means to: set apart for a sacred purpose – Webster. Devoted and consecrated are used in other passages and carry a similar meaning. Paul illustrates the process of sanctifying: *Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God, I Corinthians 6:11).*

They had been unrighteous but were washed, justified, and sanctified by the name of Jesus Christ and the spirit of God. As we study the gospels, we can see the progressive influence of the word on the disciples, as they gradually became less attached to the things of this world and more attached to things eternal. As the disciples were with Jesus, seeing His holiness, purity, and devotion to God the Father, they began to understand that “truth” is a representation of how things are. To see that the things of this world, pride, pomp, pleasures, wealth, and honor have little value when compared to the attributes of God. The “truths” of God’s word give us a view of his grace, beauty, and holiness that should provide us with a strong desire to be like HIM.

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and enduring word of God, I Peter 1:22 – 23. Peter follows the same thought process (he was included in the group Jesus prayed for) before we can be sanctified, the purifying must take place and be maintained to make us suitable for being devoted to work in the kingdom, useful to the Master (II Timothy 2:21).

“So that they may be one as We are One,” 17:11

Unity (17: 11, 20 – 23) - state of being one, united in plan and purpose, completely sharing the same affection for the cause of Christ. The best illustration of unity is John 15 where Jesus uses the vine and branches. *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing, John 15: 4 – 5.* John explains the full meaning of the vine/branches illustration: we abide in Christ by abiding in His word (15:7) abide in His love (15:10) abide in His spirit (I John 2:6) abide in the light (15:10) remain sinless (I John 3:6). Our union with Christ is maintained by our exercise of faith and holiness. John 10:10, 38, 14:11, Galatians 3:28

“... to be with Me where I am,” 17:24

Eternal fellowship – Jesus prays to the Father, it is His earnest desire that the Father would preserve and protect His disciples (vine/branch illustration) and bestow salvation and eternal life. “Whom you have given Me,” would extend to all who are faithful in His word, not just the apostles. This is also illustrated in John 14: 1 – 3, “there you may be also.” When coupled with I Thessalonians 4:17, “*Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall **always be with the Lord.***” Jesus expresses His desire for the faithful to be with Him is so they can behold His glory and be glorified with Him eternally. What Jesus has described here is true fellowship, no connection to food, fun, or frolic.

“The love you have for Me may be in them,” 17:26

This verse provides us with the key to all of the above thought – divine love. It is the roadmap to Heaven! If Christians love God as Jesus loved God and love each other as Jesus loved His disciples, then and only then can we expect to have eternal life abiding with Christ in Heaven with other faithful disciples.

- √ Every member demonstrated this kind of love for each other,
- √ Every member was obedient, ready to serve, and full of humility,
- √ Every member realized that all fruit of the Spirit grows from love.

John 15: 9 - 14

REFLECTING



1. Read I Peter 1:5, John 10: 28-29 and Jude 1:1. How do we maintain this kind of relationship with God today?
2. Ephesians 5:26, I Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 10: 10, 13:12 illustrate the need for sanctification. List two additional passages.
3. Explain what keeps us united with Christ in the vine/branch illustration.
4. Describe, in your own words, “fellowship.”
5. Explain why you feel you have been sanctified by the word of truth.
6. What hinders unity in the local church?

7. Are you confident of seeing the Glory of God? Why or why not?

8. What is the primary focus of Paul's prayers?

PRAYER
Lesson 13
Prayers of Praise

Prayer can so often be self-centered: *our* needs/wants, *our* forgiveness, *our* service for God, etc. The mature heart of faith is awed by the nature and character of God. Such a heart seeks to express praise to God simply because He is God. Such occasions of prayer remind us of the glory of our calling and the privilege of adoption by God.

Psalm of Praise: chapters 145 – 150

Whether these psalms were originally written as songs or prayers, they can be spoken directly to God in praise.

- ◆ Verse 1: extol
- ◆ Verse 2: praise His name
- ◆ Verse 3: Greatness – unsearchable: Romans 11:33
- ◆ Romans 11:33: O the depth – This passage could have been translated, “O the depth of the riches, wisdom and knowledge of God.” The apostle has three subjects of admiration. Our translation, by the word “both” introduced here, confines it to two. The apostle wishes to express his admiration of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God. So the Syriac, Arabic, etc. Our translation has followed the Latin Vulgate. The word “depth” is applied in the Scriptures to anything vast and incomprehensible. As the abyss, or the ocean, is unfathomable so the terms comes to denote that which words cannot express, or that which we cannot comprehend. Psalms 36:6, “Thy judgments are a great deep.” I Cor. 2: 10, “The Spirit searcheth – the deep things of God.” Rev. 2:24, “The depths of Satan” – the deep, profound, cunning and wicked plans of Satan.
- ◆ Romans 11:33: riches - (see Barnes Commentary for Romans 11:12) The word denotes the abundant blessings and mercies which had been conferred on sinful men by the gospel. These were vast and wonderful. The pardon of sin; the atonement; the hope of heaven; the peace of the

gospel; all bestowed on the sinful, the poor, the wretched, and the dying, all bespeak the great mercy and rich grace of God. Therefore, every pardoned sinner may still exclaim. The grace of God that pardons him is indeed wonderful and past comprehension. It is beyond the power of language to express and all the Christian can do is follow the example of the apostle. Meditate on the profound admiration of the rich grace of God. The expression “the depth of the riches” is a Hebraism, meaning the deep or profound riches.

◆ Romans 11: 3: wisdom – Wisdom is choosing the best means to accomplish the best ends. The end or design that God had in view was to bestow mercy on all; i.e., to save men by grace and not by our works (Romans 11:32). He intended to establish a glorious system that would present His mercy as the prominent attribute in the perfect scheme of salvation. This was to be shown in relation to Jews and Gentiles. The wonderful wisdom with which this was accomplished is the object of the apostle’s profound admiration.

1. This wisdom was seen in adapting the plan to the condition of man. All were sinners. In this epistle The apostle as fully shown that all had come short of the glory of God. Man had no power to save himself by his own wisdom. The Jews and Gentiles, using different method, had sought to justify themselves - both failed. God had left the world for four thousand years to make the trail, and then introduced the plan of Divine wisdom, just to meet the manifest wants and woes of men.

2. This was shown in His making the Jews the occasion of spreading the sty stem among the Gentiles. They were cast off and rejected; but the God of wisdom had made even this an occasion of spreading His truth.

3. The same wisdom was yet to be seen in His appointing the Gentiles to carry the gospel back to the Jews. Thus, they were to be mutual aids; until all their interests should be blended and the entire race should be united in the love of the same gospel and the service of the same God and Savior. When, therefore, this profound and wonderful plan is contemplated and its history traced from the commencement to the end of time, no wonder the apostle was awed by the amazing wisdom of Him who devised it and who has made all events subservient to this establishment and spread among men.

In addition, **knowledge**: that is foreknowledge, or omniscience. This knowledge was manifest.

4. In a discernment of the effect of the rejection of the Jew and of the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles. Who but God could see such effects would follow the rejection of the Jews? Who but He could know the gospel should yet prevail among all the nations? We have only to think of the changes in human affairs; the obstacles to the gospel; the difficulties to

be surmounted; and the vast work yet to be done to be amazed at the knowledge that can adapt such a scheme to men and which can certainly predict its complete and final spread among all the families of man.

How unsearchable – the word “unsearchable” means that which cannot be investigated or fully understood.

His judgments – means His arrangement, His plan, or proceeding. It sometimes refers to laws or at other times to the decision or determination of God and at other times to the infliction of His justice. In this last sense, it is now commonly used. However, in the case before us, it means His arrangements for conferring the gospel on men.

His ways – denotes a path or road on which one travels. Hence, it comes to denote the course or manner of life in which one moves; or his principles, or moral; his doctrine or teaching. When applied to God it denotes His mode or manner of doing things; the order or His divine providence; His movement, in His great plans, through the universe.

Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Acts 13:10

They have not known my ways. Heb. 3:10

Thy way is in the sea, thy footsteps are not known. Psalms 77:19 This verse refers particularly to His way of plan of bringing all nations within the reach of His mercy in the gospel.

Past finding out - cannot be tracked or traced out. The footsteps cannot be followed. As if His path were in the sea (Psalms 77:19) and the waves closed immediately, leaving no track, it cannot be followed or sought out. It is known that He has passed but there is no way of tracing His goings. This is a beautiful and striking figure. It denotes that God’s plans are deep and beyond our comprehension. We can see the proofs that He is everywhere; but how it is, we cannot comprehend. We are permitted to see the vast movements around us; but the invisible hand we cannot see, nor trace the footsteps of that mighty god who performs His wonders on the ocean and on the land.

Pass it On – Psalms 145:4 (Isa. 38:19, Deut. 4:9, 6:7, Eph. 6:4)

Mediate - Psalms 145:5

Speak awesome acts - Psalms 145:6

Eagerly utter - Psalms 145:7

The **LORD** upholds (sustains) all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down. Psalms 145:14

REFLECTING



1. List the terms David used in Psalms 145: 1-7 to express praise of God.
2. Compare Psalms 145:3 and Romans 11:33.
3. List illustrations given in Psa. 145:4.
4. Compare Psa. 145:4 to Isa. 38:19 and Deut. 4:9, 6:7. List any New Testament passages that reflect the same idea.
5. What lesson can we learn from Psa. 145: 8 & 9?

Please use the attached material in preparation for the Roundtable discussion during next lesson.

Material for Roundtable Discussion

Identify Current Style of Leadership

1. Authoritarian – the eldership functions **ONLY** in a decision-making role, giving little or no thought to the need for administrating, spiritual counseling, or teaching. *

2. Open style – primarily an attitude. It is an effort to be a servant rather than a lord. It works through communications. It is made effective through many efforts to keep the members informed and through many more efforts to get the members involved at the input state of the decision-making process. Finally, it is made real through the elders who lead by their example, their teaching, and their persuasion – rather than just ordering the members to obey. *

Which of these styles do you see in practice at Eastside? Be prepared to give specific examples and changes to be made.

The three terms we find in the New Testament that are used concerning those who lead are:

1. Elder (presbyter), decision-maker, policymaking, executive role
2. Bishop (overseer, administrator)
3. Shepherd (spiritual counselor, teacher)

How well do you see these roles being carried out at Eastside? Give specific examples.

Where is most of the time, effort and energy of elders being spent?

Communicating with the Congregation – Are the elders following the K.I.S.S (Keep it short stupid) principle?

How can the elders improve the flow of information in both directions?

Planning for the future

1. Vision – Aims
2. Goal setting, objectives, for 3, 5, 10 years
3. Suggestion for developing leaders

* Flavil Yeakley Jr.

PRAYER
Lesson 14
Confession of Sins

Perhaps the most important prayer uttered by man is when he beseeches God for forgiveness of sin. It is sin, and only sin, that separates us from fellowship with God; therefore, our spiritual relationship with God is dependent upon the removal of sin. This occurs when confession and repentance is preceded by true conviction of guilt. Consider the following prayers of confession.

DAVID
Psalms 51

Though David covered his sin for a time and denied his guilt, conviction finally came through the story told by Nathan the prophet. Psa. 51 is an unburdening of David's heart before God.

+ **Psa. 51: 1 & 2** A fervent plea for the removal of sin on the basis of God's mercy. Not only was David's sin against God, it was also against the whole order of society, including the life of a friend, a valiant soldier, the husband of Bathsheba, and the role of king and leader selected by God.

+ **Verse 1**

Be gracious to me O God – Without mercy I am totally lost and ruined. The word gracious denotes the kind of natural affection and tenderness which even a wild animal show their young.

According to thy loving-kindness – A strong disposition to goodness and compassion is noted.

Greatness of your compassion – The most tender pity which is signified by the moving of the heart to the highest degree of compassion.

Blot out my transgression – This is in reference to the indictment; he pleads guilty but begs that the proper fluid be applied to the parchment to cause the ink to disappear so no record of it will appear against him. Today we would call that expunging the record. ONLY the mercy, loving-kindness, and tender compassion of the Lord can accomplish this.

+ **Verse 3** *Wash me thoroughly* – Again and again my stain is deep and ordinary washing will not *cleans*e me from my iniquity.

I know my transgressions – I have confessed my sins and yet *my sin ever before me* – every direction I look I see my sin.

+ **Verse 4** *Against you, you only I have sinned* – David acknowledges his sin against God ONLY because as king he was not likely to be called into account by his subjects nor any authority in the land that would judge and punish him for his sins. ONLY God is greater than the king is and to Him David is responsible.

So that you are justified when you speak and blameless when you judge – Because God is all-knowing, He can always speak and judge without partiality.

+ **Verses 7 – 12** – David continues to plead for restoration to his former state of inner peace, steadfast faith and intimate fellowship with the God of heaven.

Verse 7 *Purify me* – Purge me, make me clean (Heb. 9: 13 & 14) and the results will make me *whiter than snow* (Eph. 5: 26 & 27).

Verse 8 *Make me to hear joy and gladness* – With sin removed he can return to a life in fellowship with god which is joy and gladness.

Verse 9 *Hide your face from my sins* – Continual pleading to blot out my sins (another reference to the removal from the written record). Fluids were used to remove ink from parchment and blotted so as not to smear the parchment.

Beginning with Verse 10 we can see a change in David's approach as reformation begins to create in me a clean heart. With sin and iniquity gone there is NOW a place to renew a steadfast spirit with me (II Cor. 5:17). By David's actions, the penitent heart will be receptive to accept God's word in his heart. A clean heart can only come when the old sinful heart has been cleansed by God's method, not what we think.

Look at I Peter 1:22, *Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls*. Notice that Peter states **you** made the effort, your personal intent lead to the purifying of your soul by obedience to the truth of God's word. The amount of effort we exert to conform to God's word is in direct correlations to our level of fellowship with God. We yield to the requirements of the truth, allowing the word to guide and influence our minds. When the soul is purified, the result will produce a sincere love of the brethren (John 13: 34 & 35, I John 3: 14 – 18). Peter emphasis the point **fervently love one another from the heart**, this is not a passive statement. We get the word fever from the word fervent, being hot our love for the brethren should not be lukewarm, translating into - when I get around to it. The genuine love Peter speaks of is strong and intense, not cold and formal.

Verse 12 *Restore to me the joy of your salvation.* Consider the horribleness of this situation. David had lost the joy of serving God. He had once had that joy and had lost it because of sin. II Peter 2: 20 – 22 describes just how horrible it is to know the truth and to turn back to the world of sin. As is usually the case David had lied, deceived, connived and sought to ignore the giant sin in his life, to satisfy his own pleaser.

Sustain me with a willing spirit – Go, support me lest I fall, I am unable to stand on my own. David needs the willing spirit of God to prop him up (similar to verse 10b).

Verse 13 *Then I will teach transgressors Your ways* – David vows to learn from his sinful experience and use that to teach and counsel others.

Verses 14 – 17 – repeated pleas for forgiveness, restoration and acknowledgement of the most central thing to forgiveness, a **broken** heart.

Note: While God will forgive the guilt of sin, the consequences of our actions may remain as in the case of David. I Kings 15: 3 – 5

The sin of unlawful marriage Ezra 9: 5 – 10:1 Upon returning from captivity the Israelite remnant intermarried *so that the holy seed is intermingled with the peoples of the lands.* When this situation came to be known, Ezra *sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.* He then began a heart-rending confession of national sin against god. Notice the deep grief, not over his own personal sins but the sins of his people whom he feared will be utterly destroyed after God has blessed them as they returned from captivity.

REFLECTING



64. List the sins David committed.

2. Examine the connection between Psa. 51 and Acts 3:19.

3. Why did David ask God to wash him?

4. Explain how David was restored.

5. Why did Ezra feel the nation of Israel was polluted by sin?

6. Did Ezra blame God for imposing a law that was impossible to keep? Explain.

