

Prayer



Introduction

Prayer is simply talking to God. Prayer is also one way in which we honor God. The accounts of the lives of believers in the Bible are filled with their prayers to God. Jesus himself prayed. Today we study God's Word to see what he teaches us about prayer. The role of prayer in our Christian lives extends far beyond catechism class or mindless recitation on Sunday morning. This study of what the Bible says about prayer is designed to help Christians in their reflection on the impact of prayer in all areas of our lives. There is never good motivation for any reason to not pray.

Opening Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for the blessing and privilege of praying to you with the confidence that we will be heard for Jesus' sake. We now ask that, as we gather around your Word, you send your Spirit into our hearts to sanctify our thoughts and words as we study prayer. Amen.*

Lesson Aim: What is prayer?

Part One

Read Genesis 18:23-33 and Genesis 19:27-29

- 1) What does Abraham ask of God in his prayer? (What are Abraham's actual words?)
- 2) What is Abraham's concern? (What did Abraham really want?)
- 3) Does Abraham get what he asked for?
- 4) Does he get what he wanted?

Abraham is commended for his boldness in praying to God in this account. God knew what Abraham really wanted, and God knew what was best.

Read Matthew 7:9-11

- 5) Does God always give us what we ask for in our prayers?
- 6) If we ask God for something good, will he ever give us something bad instead?
- 7) Has God blessed you?
- 8) Who knows what's really best for you: you or God?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

- 9) What is Paul's prayer?
- 10) What is God's answer?
- 11) Is Paul pleased with that answer?
- 12) What is the benefit of God answering Paul's prayer in this way?

Read Hebrews 4:16

- 13) What attitude can we have as we pray to God?

KEY POINT 1 - God wants us confidently to ask and to thank him for anything anytime and anywhere.

What I've learned so far:

Part Two

We should know where in the Bible the Lord's Prayer is found. That is going to be important for us to know for the next several lessons. Jesus teaches the prayer on two separate occasions. Using your knowledge of the Bible, find them. Read both accounts, and compare the two.

1) Does Jesus give us the Lord's Prayer as a command to pray or as an encouragement and an example to pray?

Take a moment to consider how many times a week you pray the Lord's Prayer.

2) Do we pray enough?

3) Consider how often you pray. How many hours each week do you think you spend praying?

4) God encourages us to pray about all things at all times, to keep praying and don't give up. None of us do. We could all pray more. We could add several hours of prayer each week without even changing our schedules. We could pray more often simply by praying while we do something else. Think of some things in your weekly routine that would allow for you to pray while you do them. Make a list of what you come up with, and we'll share with each other in class.

Read Matthew 6:5-8

5) How does Jesus describe the prayers of the hypocrites?

6) What's wrong with the way they pray?

7) Instead, how are we to pray? Why?

8) How does Jesus describe the prayers of the pagans?

9) Why don't we need to pray that way?

Read Matthew 26:36-44

Even Jesus prayed. Jesus' active prayer-life was a great example not only for his disciples, but also for us.

10) How does Jesus end his prayer in verses 39 and 42?

11) Does the Father answer Jesus' prayer?

12) What reason to pray does Jesus give in his encouragement in verse 41?

13) Just like Jesus, in everything we pray that _____ be done, not _____.

Read Luke 18:9-14

14) Though we can pray to God with an attitude of confidence, what emotion does God want us to have as we come to him in prayer?

Read Matthew 15:8-9

15) In these verses, Jesus is quoting the prophet Isaiah. What was the problem with the people he's referring to? What was wrong with their prayers?



Part Two continued ...

Prayer is good. God commands us to pray, and twice in the New Testament, Jesus gives us his pattern for prayer. We can pray prayers adapted from Jesus' model prayer, or we can pray prayers using a pattern of words that we came up with on our own. What is not good is the empty chattering of words that can result from thoughtless recitations of a memorized prayer. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus encourages us as Christians and gives us the fullness of Christian truth and all the blessedness it brings. The Lord's Prayer is simple enough for beginners to pray and deep enough for them to grow into all their lives.

Read Romans 8:26

Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer to give us something to pray when we can't think of the words to say. Romans 8:26 gives us the impressive assurance that even when we don't know what to say or what to pray for, God still hears our prayers and knows what we need.

KEY POINT 2 - Prayer is believers in Jesus speaking to God from their hearts.

What I've learned so far:

Part Three

Read pages 236-242 in the Catechism and answer the following questions in your own words.

- 1) What is prayer?
- 2) True or False: God hears everyone's prayers? See also Isaiah 59:2.
- 3) What should be the content of our prayers?

Some Helpful Passages

God gives us the opportunity to talk to him in prayer for our good.

Read Psalm 50:15, Philippians 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:7

Why should we pray?

Read 1 John 5:14

How should we pray?

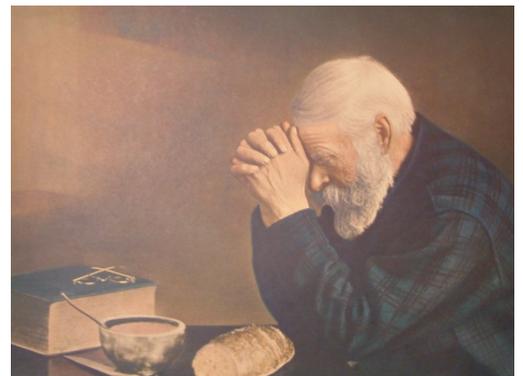
Read James 5:16

For what should we pray? (Notice how awesome the second sentence of this verse is.)

Read Ephesians 6:18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

When should we pray?

What other stories about prayer do you know from the Bible?



Main point — Prayer is confidently speaking to God through faith in Jesus, asking or thanking him for anything, anytime, anywhere.

Some practical notes on prayer:

- Folding hands and bowing head may help some people concentrate. So may kneeling. Some people prefer to pray out loud, others silently. Find out what works best for you.
- No prayer is too big - or too small - to take to the Lord.
- Although we may take prayers to God at any time/place, it is a good idea to set aside a regular time for prayer. (Maybe right after your Bible study time!)
- Concentrate on praying for others. (Because of our selfish sinful nature, we don't have much problem remembering to pray for ourselves.) Pray for your family and friends, neighbors, governmental leaders, your teachers or pastor and other church leaders, your fellow Christians, unbelievers -- the list can go on and on! (1Timothy 2:1-4)
- Since prayer is a response of faith, reading the Word of God will be vital to keep your prayer-life healthy.
- Remember who you are and whose you are! You are God's child. He loves to hear from you! (1 John 3:1)



Final Considerations:

1) What privilege and command does God give to those who believe in Jesus Christ?

2) What should move us to pray?



- A. Our faith
- B. God's commands
- C. God's promises
- D. Our own and our neighbor's needs

3) In whose name do we pray?

4) We read in Matthew 6:8 that God knows what we need even before we ask him. Then why does God still desire that we pray to him?



What I've learned about prayer:

Commit to Memory:

- Philippians 4:6
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
 - The Lord's Prayer
- Prayer—Matthew 6, Luke 11