

My Prayer Life with God

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to these studies of our prayer life with God.

What is prayer? It is fellowship of the most profound kind with our heavenly Father. It is our privilege as God's children **to talk with Him** in confidence and boldness.

"Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"
Galatians 4:6

We have a loving and wonderful God. His plan, designed before the foundation of the world is being worked out before our eyes. This plan is clearly displayed in His Word and so we know about its author, its course, and its final outcome. We have the assurance that we are part of this plan and are called to participate in what God is doing.

God chose us to be involved with Him, consciously, willfully, responsibly, and significantly. (John 15:16, Eph. 2:10, James 5:16) We are to take the gospel of the work of our Savior and Lord and proclaim it throughout the whole world. We are to take our place in the body of Christ and use our God-given gifts to serve the other members in love and seek the salvation of the lost together.

This gospel work requires that we become a praying people. Prayer is a most astonishing aspect of God's plan, as He uses redeemed sinners to actually work with Him. This is fellowship of the most profound nature and a foretaste of our heavenly eternity with God. Prayer is talking to God.

The goal of these studies is much more than just learning what God's Word tells us about prayer. **Our goal is to grow in our relationship with God** by maturing our prayer life. Notice just three of the many commands of our Lord to commune with Him in prayer and **ask yourself if you are passionately pursuing these as a priority in your life.** He wants to share His life with you. Remember, prayer is talking to God.

- I. Be devoted to talking to God (Rom 12:12).
- II. Talk to God without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17).
- III. Talk to God about all the saints, at all times, with all perseverance (Eph 6:18).

God has waited for you to be born before His final judgement comes to end man's rebellion against Him. He has planned to share His life with you in heaven. But He has some glorifying work yet to do in saving lost souls and building his church. He wants to share this work with you and has planned to do some of it through you. (Eph. 2:10, John 15:16) Rewards await those who learn to talk with God about His plan concerning who, what, when, where, how, and why.

"The effectual prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." James 5:16

God has invited us as His beloved children to share His life and work on earth for a time, as he completes the salvation of many others. God is glorifying Himself in this demonstration of His mercy, grace, and selfless love and is determined to share this glory with us.

John 15:16 teaches us that we did not choose God, but He chose us, so that we would produce much fruit in our Christian lives. Likewise, in Ephesians, Paul states, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them”* (Eph 2:10).

We should ask the questions: “why do we pray?” The short answer is: to talk to our heavenly Father about what we face in life and ask Him to provide what we need to love Him and others in this fallen world. We are still here on the earth to share God’s soon to be completed work. We are told to ask for what we need, be it wisdom, comfort, or strength. We are told to consider others more important than ourselves, like He does. So, our conversations with God are to include appeals for others—for their salvation, their faith in Christ’s saving work at Calvary, their hope in the promised things to come, and their selfless love of others.

The instructions and examples of prayer in God’s written Word are the focus of the studies in this book. The goal of which is to help you excel in your prayer life and, as God has planned, to change the world and all eternity by **your prayer life with God**.

May your prayer life become what God wants it to be, both as you talk with Him in studying His revelations to us about prayer and as you pursue the associated prayer projects of these Study Units. The apostle Paul prayed that this might happen to the saints God had directed him to pray for and give his life to:

*“We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in **all** spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in **all** respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with **all** power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of **all** steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.”* Colossians 1:9–12

STUDY UNIT 1

James 5:16–18 / John 14:13–14 / John 15:16

GOD'S GREAT ASSERTIONS ABOUT YOUR PRAYER LIFE

Why would God encourage you to talk with Him and ask Him to do things for you and others? Because your Father in heaven has called you to join Him in His work to glorify His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The dimension of prayer is one of the most astonishing aspects of God's plan. He has chosen to glorify His name and character by allowing us to be actively involved. Remember what He has told those of us for whom He gave His life:

*"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you **that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.**"*
John 15:16

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**"*
Ephesians 2:10

Prayer is talking to our Father in heaven about living life for Him in this fallen world. Our prayer life with God involves life's greatest privilege, greatest wonders, greatest opportunities, and is our greatest weapon in the long war against God in which we serve as His soldiers, servants, and body.

Prayer is asking God to reverse the consequences of sin, its penalty, its power, and its presence in and through our life and the life of others for His glory. By asking for ourselves and others we will be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, **so that knowing and exalting the person, work, and love of Jesus Christ our Lord**, we may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

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

Christ came to pay sin's penalty and replace an eternity in hell with an eternity in heaven for those who trust in Him alone. He asked the Father to send the Holy Spirit to be with us and empower us to conquer sin and please God in all respects. And when our work on earth is done, we shall live in a new heavens and earth where sin is never present!

The teaching and examples we have of prayer in the New Testament all have this focus of Christ's love, the Spirit's power, the Father's glory, for all the saints. Let us begin our studies of

this great wonder of prayer by noting **the primary assertions God makes about our prayers to Him.**

1. **The fervent, effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much!**

“The fervent, effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

James 5:16

If we know Who we are talking to, what He wants, and is willing to do, and then boldly and confidently talk to Him about these things, we can expect Him to answer. When we pray “fervently and effectively” we are asking the Omnipotent Ruler of the universe to intervene in the world supernaturally to reverse the consequences of sin. What a privilege! What a wonder! The apostle Paul said:

*“We (Christians) **have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.... For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father.**”*

Ephesians 3:12–14

The following assertions clarify for us just what “effective” prayer is.

2. **Christians who are abiding in Christ can have powerful prayer lives.**

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.”

John 15:7–10

“Abiding in Christ” and “being filled with the Spirit” both describe our personal relationship with the Trinity when we are choosing to obey God’s Word, do what He says, and stay in dependence upon Him. We must yield to His will and maintain our dependence on Him to receive the promises He has made of giving us what we ask. Both abiding and being filled involve yielding our lives to God. This allows the indwelling Spirit to lead, teach, and enable us to do all that God asks of us (see Luke 4). Praying in the Spirit is to be led, taught, and enabled by the same Spirit to whom we are yielding our lives.

Christ used the relationship of a grape vine (referring to Himself) and a branch attached to a grape vine (referring to a Christian) to describe what an abiding relationship is.

*“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

3. Our knowledge of God’s Word, God’s will, and God’s name will determine the power of our intercessory prayers.

*“If you abide in Me, AND **My words** abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”*
John 15:7

*“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, **IF** we ask anything **according to His will**, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”*
1 John 5:14–15

*“Whatever you ask **in My name**, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”*
John 14:13

To pray as God desires us to pray, we must fill our minds with His Word, so as to become aware of His will. To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray according to His will, and consistent with His character, nature, and purpose. Our Lord has given us authority to ask the Father for things and intercede for others in His name. We are invited to ask the Sovereign God of the universe for things in the name of His Son, things according to His will, things consistent with His Word. These things, we are told, He will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. What a stunning privilege.

4. If we ask God for wisdom (His view and opinion on a matter) He will give it, provided we believe God is able and willing to do so.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”
James 1:5–8

These assertions from God regarding our prayers to Him are taught and illustrated in the many instructions and examples of prayer in Scripture that we will be considering in the following Study Units. May each one help you become a more confident and fruitful prayer warrior for the Lord. As you proceed through these Study Units, review **the following summary** of the Bible’s progressive revelation about prayer that we find in His Word to us:

Summary: My Prayer Life with God

We have a wonderful heavenly Father. He has a plan, devised before the foundation of the world, that is being worked out before us. We can only see a small part of this plan during our lives, but we know its course and its outcome as it is set out in God’s Word. We have the assurance that **we are part of this plan.**

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we would walk in them.”
Ephesians 2:10

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”
John 15:16

The nature of my work for God **requires that I become a person of prayer**. This is communion with God of a profound nature and is an astonishing aspect of God’s plan. God could certainly execute His plan without using me, but He loves me and wants to share His life with me.

I have a foretaste of eternity here, as God’s child, to share His life and call upon Him with confidence. He is reversing the consequences of sin by His work in me and through me, to the glory of my Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

UNIT 1 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group study read and study the above material and then complete the following self-evaluation.

Evaluating My Prayer Life With God

1. Prayer is _____ the most important thing in my life.
_____ a very important part of my life.
_____ important in my life.
_____ a part of my life.
2. I keep track of my prayers and God's answers _____ I do _____ I have _____ I don't
3. My confidence that my prayers really make a difference is _____ strong _____ weak
4. If I am going to be confident, fervent, devoted, and constantly praying to God, I am going to need

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. Have you ever kept a prayer journal? Do you have stories regarding that practice?
2. The first assertion of the study is the claim of James 5:16 that prayer can accomplish much—if it is “fervent and effectual.” So, let's assume that a prayer is “fervent and effectual.” What could such prayer accomplish?
3. To what degree is a person's maturity in Christ a factor in his or her prayer life?
4. Why doesn't God answer our prayers—ones that we know are requests for what is right and what He would want, even for what He has said He would do? This puzzled David (e.g. Psalm 6 and 13), and Job (13:24) and Paul (2 Cor 3:8). Why doesn't God always answer “good” prayers?
5. The last section of the study involves the warning in James 1 regarding praying to God for His wisdom about something without believing that God is able and willing to give as He has promised. Should verse seven's warning to such an individual apply to all his prayers?

Prayer Together

UNIT 1 STUDY SESSION #2:

In preparation for the second study session please consider doing the following project for the coming week.

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

Our single project for this coming week is to set aside time to SEEK THE LORD IN PRAYER and to begin a PRAYER JOURNAL of your requests and God's answers.

We will be focusing on new aspects of prayer each week as we look at the many examples and instructions about our times and conversations with God. Continuing a PRAYER JOURNAL through these studies on prayer will be the foundational application each week and is encouraged. May we all be blessed by what happens!

You are encouraged to read the summary that ends this week's study (My Prayer Life With God) as you begin each of your prayer times this week. May it remind you of the important truths that God has revealed to us.

Your initial prayer journal can be quite simple, as shown here. It has proven effective for many.

Date	My Prayers	What Happened
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03/03/17	1. For the salvation of my son Johny	4/12/23 Guess what!!!
	2. I prayed for....	
	3. For....	3/5/17 Praise the Lord!
	4. For	

Discussion Questions

Our project this week was to set aside time to seek the Lord and pray, and to begin a prayer journal. If you were able to do this, can you share with us how this went?

Prayer Together

STUDY UNIT 2

Luke 11:1–13 / Matt. 6:5–15

“LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY”

We learned in the prior Study Unit **WHY** we are to be devoted to prayer, to unceasingly live our life consciously in His presence, and to talk to Him at all times, with all perseverance. We are to do this because He loves us, and wants to share Himself and His life with us. Given this, let us examine **HOW** are we to pray.

The focus of this Study Unit is to learn what Christ told His disciples about **HOW** to pray. We find His teaching in Matthew 6 and again in Luke 11.

"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'"

Matthew 6:9–13

The Lord has given us **8 major truths** that are to direct our prayer life here.

1. God's Salvation Through Christ—"Our Father, who art in heaven"

There are 2 families in this world. There is the family of Adam, into which every person is born; and there is the family of God, into which we were reborn by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We were once children of darkness but are now children of light (Eph 5:8). We were dead in our trespasses and sins but are now alive in Christ (Eph 2:1). We were once children of wrath, but now we are God's children of His love (Eph 2:2–3).

Jesus always addressed God as "Father" in all his prayers with one exception. When he was on the cross, at the moment in which He was made to be sin for mankind, and the relationship He previously had with His Father was broken, His cry was, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me" (Matt 27:46)?

Jesus is uniquely God's Son, and God is uniquely His Father. But as He taught His disciples to pray, He revealed that, wonder of wonders, that same relationship is true for those who have believed in Him—whose sins are removed by His suffering. When you talk to God, say, "Our Father" because He is your Father (1 John 3:1). Thank you, Jesus, for making this possible!

The fact that God is the Father of believers is emphasized in other parts of Scripture. *Abba* is used three times in the NT for Father (Mk 14:36; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). It is the Aramaic word which means "dear Father." This is a term of warm affection and intimacy for a father, which children, whether youths or adults, would use when addressing their dads.

You have the privilege of addressing God as your father, with all the warmth and affection of a close, intimate, family relationship. If you are saved, this is your privilege. You are His child. You are His delight. He will help you in all your days of infancy. He is your Father. He will teach you how to walk, picking you up when you fall down. He will go before you and show you the way through life. He is your Father and He will care for you all the days of your life and bless you abundantly.

“O My Father, my dear Father, (*Abba*), Who art in Heaven, I know You love me and consider me even more important than Yourself. Please guide me today in the way. You will counsel me with Your eye upon me. I want to walk in a manner worthy of being Your child and to be pleasing to You in all that I do. Amen”

2. God’s Name—“Hallowed be Thy Name”

Peter used the word translated here as “hallowed” in 1 Peter 3:15. In this verse Peter uses it to mean “**Give God the place in your heart that He deserves.**” Do you hallow the name of God? For example, do you honor Him as **Elohim**, your Creator? This is the first of **several hundred names** God uses to reveal Himself to us. Do you hallow God as **El Elyon**, a title that refers to His sovereign rule over His creation? Do you know Him as **Adonai**, which is translated *Lord* in our Bibles? Is He the One who directs your life and to whom you honor and give your highest allegiance to? Do you know God as **Jehovah**, the name by which He reveals Himself as our Redeemer?

These names hardly begin to exhaust the character, attributes, and glory of our God. He is the **Father**, the **Son**, and the **Holy Spirit**. He is the **Alpha** and the **Omega**, and the **Ancient of Days**.

He is the **Wonderful Counselor**, the **Mighty God**, the **Everlasting Father**, and the **Prince of Peace**. He is the **Way**, the **Truth**, and the **Life**. He is the **Light of The World**, the **Good Shepherd**, the **Bread of Life**, the **Lord of lords** and the **King of kings**. He is the **Comforter**, **Teacher**, **Helper**, and **Guide**. He is the **Faithful One**. He is **Love**. And beyond this, He is described by over 400 more names and titles found in our Bibles that reveal our Heavenly Father to us.

“Our Father, who art in heaven, we would give You the place in our heart that You deserve. We acknowledge and honor You as our Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. You are the Eternal, Sovereign, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Lord over all. You are our Good Shepherd, our Rock, our Strong Tower, and our Fortress. You are our Strength and Power, our Comfort and Joy. Amen.”

3. God’s Kingdom—“Thy kingdom come”

There are two aspects of the Kingdom of God that we must learn if we are to pray with power about it. One is God’s present **Kingdom on Earth** by which he is seeking to build his church and rule in the hearts of individuals. This is an imperfect kingdom opposed and influenced by the devil. Christ explains the imperfect nature of this kingdom by using the parables found in

Matthew 13: the parables of the sower, the wheat and tares, the leaven, the mustard seed, the pearl of great price, and the dragnet.

The other kingdom revealed to us is **The Coming Kingdom** in which the rule of our Lord Jesus Christ will be complete and totally recognized. (See Luke 19:11–27, Acts 1:6–8)

We are to pray fervently for the salvation of lost souls, for Christ to be the King in the hearts of men and women on the earth until Christ comes (Matt 24:14), and also separately for our Lord to return to rule and reign upon the earth in His millennial reign.

“Our Father, we pray for the building of Your church in these last days. Help us to be the light You enable us to be, to stand for You in this Long War against You. Help us proclaim the gospel of Your salvation in all the world. And Father we ask that our Lord Jesus would come quickly. Amen.”

4. **God’s Will—“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”**

Jesus is teaching us here, that we are to live so strongly in the knowledge and sphere of God’s name, God’s kingdom, and God’s glory, that our prayers may be so confident that we may boldly say, “Thy will be done.”

“My Father, I do not pray just for myself in what I face today and I am not asking that my will be done. I would that You would be glorified in and through my life. Glorify Your name now in my situation, and do it in such a way that all will know that it is of You. Thy will be done. Amen.”

Our Lord now turns from these three priorities of praying for God’s name, God’s kingdom, and God’s will, to **three petitions that cover the whole of our personal life as believers**. The whole compass of our life is found in these prayers: 1) our bodily needs, 2) our soul needs, and 3) our spiritual needs are all addressed.

5. **God’s Provision for our needs—“Give us this day our daily bread”**

The phrase “our daily bread” includes by implication all the needs of life: food and clothing, a place to live, a job, and other physical necessities. God, we are told in Phil. 4:19, “will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” It is noteworthy that this does not say “all your wants.”

It is also important to remember, as we pray, that God allows tests and trials for a purpose, along with exhortations to respond to them in faith and confidence that He will provide what we need to endure the ones He allows for a purpose. We are to ask, not only for help and relief, but for His grace and strength to endure these times of trial that He allows for our growth and His glory.

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.... Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has

been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

James 1:2–12

“My Father, today I come to ask You for help in enduring the physical trials that I face. Thank you for the hope you have given me through your promises and what I have seen and received of Your provisions in the past. Strengthen my faith today and surround me with Your favor as with a shield against the lies of the enemy. Please demonstrate Yourself strong to me in giving what is needed in this season. Thank You, Lord, for Your love and care for me and mine.” Amen.”

6. **God’s Forgiveness—“Forgive us our sins, as we forgive others”**

All Christians still retain a sin nature, face a great enemy, and are tempted to sin. Our old nature gets us into trouble again and again. God has provided the way for us to continually find forgiveness for our sins. All of us must return to the Lord again and again to confess our sin and ask for forgiveness and cleansing.

*“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. [But]...**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**”*

1 John 1:8–9

When we sin and try to go forward in life without confessing sin to God, the Holy Spirit who dwells within us is **grieved** (Eph 4:30). If we sin, knowingly saying “no” to God’s revealed will, we **quench** the Spirit—His ministry of help, comfort, and power stops until we pray for forgiveness, (1 Thess 5:19). The glorious truth is that if we confess and ask for forgiveness, God will certainly grant it to us.

“My Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. You are the God of perfect holiness Who cannot endure sin. I have sinned again. Thank you for sending Your Son to pay the penalty for what I have done. I ask that You will forgive me because of what my Savior has done for me. I am not worthy of such love. Thank you for allowing me to go forward with a clear conscience before You. My sin is washed away! Amen.”

7. **God’s Leading and Deliverance—“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”**

As we near the end of Christ’s instructions to us as to how to pray, He teaches us to pray that God would keep us from Satan’s temptations and deliver us from His evil. Temptation comes to us from three sources. First, we are to flee the **temptations of the flesh** (2 Tim 2:22, 1 Cor 6:18). Second, we are to renew our minds to escape the **temptations of the world** (Rom 12:1–2). Thirdly, we are to resist the **temptations of our Adversary, Satan** (Eph 6:10–18).

Here, Christ is addressing the last of these temptations, those that come to us directly from Satan (the evil one). We are helped in knowing how to do this by James, who tells us that we must do two things: **submit to God and resist the Devil.**

“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” James 4:7

So, how are we to do these two things?

Submitting to God simply means to surrender one’s will to God. Since this cannot be done apart from a personal relationship with Him, for a believer it means that we must spend time talking with Him in prayer (Matt 16:24).

Resisting the devil, who operates chiefly by deception, means that we must learn God’s Word and impose it on our minds and circumstances. This is what Jesus did when God led Him to be tested by the devil (see Luke 4). He resisted Satan’s cunning misuse of God’s word with the truth of God’s word and quoted from God’s word. The devil fled from Him.

We should notice that before these temptations, **Jesus had spent 40 days in prayer** with God and had **submitted** Himself fully to Him. After this submission we read that He was “filled with the Spirit.” The Spirit was leading Him in life and enabling Him to stand against every attempt to deceive Him to sin. Thus, when the devil was allowed to tempt Him, He was able to **resist** his greatest efforts to get Jesus to violate God’s Word. We must seek the Lord’s power to resist the devil through humble submission and prayer, as our Lord did.

8. **God’s Promises—“For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.”**

These are not requests or supplications. They are **acknowledgements** that our God is **preeminent in everything and over everything**. God’s kingdom is certain, His power is sufficient for all situations, and His glory will ultimately prevail. This is our HOPE. If we worry about the future, doubt God’s ability to take care of us, or rely upon our own power to meet life’s challenges, we will not confidently make these final statements to God when we are talking to Him. Our God will be too small, our prayers too timid, and our lives correspondingly fruitless. “My Father, You are the preeminent One in all the universe and all my own heart today. I am taking up my cross to follow You where you call me to go and do what You call me to do. You alone are **the King of all** creation forever and ever. You alone possess **all power** to rule and overrule. **All glory** is Yours forever and ever. Thank you for loving me more than I can imagine. Help me to so live today that all that I do pleases and glorifies You. May my light so shine by Your grace through me, that they may see **You** and praise **You**. Amen.”

UNIT 2 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group study, read and study the above scriptures and summary and then complete the following self-evaluation.

Evaluating My Prayer Life in Light of Christ's Instructions

1. I am approaching God both with confidence (*My Father...*) and humble adoration.

2. My thoughts and hopes on His coming are in my prayers. (*Thy kingdom come...*)

3. Confession is a part of my prayers. (*Forgive us...*)

4. Requests for clear leading and protection are in my prayers. (*Lead us...deliver us...*)

5. God's sovereign rule and overrule is in my mind as we talk. (*For Thine is the...*)

Discussion Questions

Unit 1 addressed God's clear assertions to us that prayer is important and that it can accomplish much. This study is on Christ's answer to His first disciples on HOW to pray.

1. What did you learn from this study about Christ's answer to how to pray?
2. Did the "8 truths" divisions of His answer help?
3. Have you been able to set aside times with the Lord this week? Are you facing challenges with this? What commitments have you made regarding this? Do you need accountability and encouragement?

Prayer Together

UNIT 2 STUDY SESSION #2:

Our goal in these studies is to grow in our relationship with God by the maturing of our prayer life. Our ongoing project through these studies is to set aside regular and special times to **SEEK THE LORD IN PRAYER** and to keep a **PRAYER JOURNAL** of our requests and God's answers. Given the focus of this study, consider doing one or more of the following in preparation for our time next week:

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

1. Memorize the Lord's Prayer.
2. As you begin each time with the Lord this week, use this model prayer to guide your praise, thanksgiving, and requests.
3. Continue to use your prayer journal.

Discussion Questions

If you were able to pursue one or more of the projects of this, can you share with us about it.

How has your journaling gone this week? Any answers?

Prayer Together

STUDY UNIT 3

Eph. 3:14–19 / Phil.1:9–11 / Col. 1:9–12

THE PRAYERS OF PAUL FOR OTHERS

There are 35 prayers of the apostle Paul in the New Testament. Wow! Moreover, these are **all** made to God for others. Our study of prayer this session is to read and study these prayers, which are presented below, so that we can practically learn how to pray by imitating Paul's example of interceding for others.

As you begin to pray for others that God may bring to your mind, this condensed summary of Paul's prayers may help guide your prayers, for they are given to us to clearly tell us what God wants us to ask for. Remember, the fervent, effectual prayers of a righteous man can accomplish much. What will God do this week as you intercede for others?

This Unit has three parts to its structure. **First**, for three of Paul's prayers (Col 1:9–12; Phil 1:9–11; Eph 3:14–19) a list of what Paul prays is given with the prayer itself to give you an example of how you might use the concepts of the prayer yourself in interceding for others. **Second**, the other prayers from across the New Testament are quoted. **Finally**, at the end of all 35 prayers you will find an 8–point summary of all Paul's prayers to give you another example of how you might pray for others.

1. Paul's Prayers from Ephesians 3:14–19; Philippians 1:9–11; and Colossians 1:9–12

For each of the following three sample prayers of Paul, notice the summaries provided, and consider how you might pray in the same way as Paul for those whom the Lord has placed in your life.

For the Christians in Ephesus, Paul asked 4 things of the Father:

1. **That they would be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,**
2. **That Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith,**
3. **That they would be able to comprehend the love of Christ,**
4. **That they might be filled up to all the fulness of God.**

“For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know

the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.”
Ephesians 3:14–19

For the Christians in Philippi, Paul asked 4 things of the Father:

1. **That their love would abound more and more,**
2. **That they would approve the things that are excellent,**
3. **That they would be sincere and blameless,**
4. **That they would be filled with the fruit of righteousness.**

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”
Philippians 1:9–11

For the Christians in Colossae Paul asked 6 things of the Father:

1. **That they would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will,**
2. **That they would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,**
3. **That they would be fruitful in every good work,**
4. **That they would increase in the knowledge of God,**
5. **That they would be strengthened with all power,**
6. **That they would live in continual thanksgiving to the Father.**

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.”
Colossians 1:3–12

2. The Other Prayers of Paul from the New Testament

“For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.”
Romans 1:9–12

*“Brethren, my heart's desire and **my prayer to God for them** is for their salvation.”*
Romans 10:1

*“**Be devoted to one another in brotherly love**; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, **devoted to prayer**, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.”*
Romans 12:10–13

*“**I thank my God always concerning you** for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*
1 Corinthians 1:4–9

*“Now **we pray to God that** you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved. For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth. For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; **this we also pray for**, that you be made complete.”*
2 Corinthians 13:7–9

*“For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while **making mention of you in my prayers**; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.
I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.”*
Ephesians 1:15–19

*“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**, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*
Ephesians 6:18–20

*“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, **always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all**, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.”*
Philippians 1:3–5

*“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything **by prayer and supplication** with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*
Philippians 4:6–7

*“For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless **I am with you in spirit**, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.”*
Colossians 2:5

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.”
Colossians 4:2–4

*“**We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;** constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.”*
1 Thessalonians 1:2–3

*“For this reason **we also constantly thank God** that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews.”*

1 Thessalonians 2:13–14

*“For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, **as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?***

Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”
1 Thessalonians 3:9–13

*“**Pray without ceasing;** in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”*
1 Thessalonians 5:17–18

*“Brethren, **pray for us.**”*

1 Thessalonians 5:25

*“**We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren,** as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. [...] **To this end we also pray for you always,** that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.”*

2 Thessalonians 1:3–12

*“**But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.** It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.*

*“**Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.**”*
2 Thessalonians 2:13–17

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

*“**May the Lord** direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.”*
2 Thessalonians 3:5

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!”
2 Thessalonians 3:16

*“**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.**”*
2 Thessalonians 3:18

*“**I thank Christ Jesus our Lord**, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. **Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.**”*
1 Timothy 1:12–17

*“Therefore **I want the men in every place to pray**, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.”*
1 Timothy 2:8

*“**I solemnly charge you in the presence of God** and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.”*
1 Timothy 5:21

*“**I charge you in the presence of God**, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time -- He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! **Amen.**”*
1 Timothy 6:13–16

“I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.”
2 Timothy 1:3–4

*“To Titus, my true child in a common faith: **Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.**”*
Titus 1:4

*“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers**, because I hear of your love and of the faith*

which you have toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all the saints; and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake. For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.” Philemon 3–7

*“At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that **through your prayers I will be given to you.**”* Philemon 22

*“**Pray for us**, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. And I urge you all the more to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. Now **may the God of peace**, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”* Hebrews 13:18–21

3. A Summary of the Prayers of Paul for Others

Here is a **condensed summary of these 35 Pauline prayers** for others. It is not meant to be all inclusive, but useful. When we pray for others we can confidently use these supplications as we seek to see them grow in their faith and their hope and their love.

1. **That they would know God’s will and be committed to it,**
2. **That they would hunger and thirst to know more and more about God,**
3. **That they would be strengthened to do God’s will by the Holy Spirit,**
4. **That they would be given wisdom and make right decisions,**
5. **That they would please God in all that they do in life,**
6. **That they would grow in the faith and be useful and fruitful in all they do,**
7. **That their love for others would grow and grow,**
8. **That they would excel still more in faith, hope, and selfless love.**

UNIT 3 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group study, read and study the above scriptures and summary and then complete the following self-evaluation.

Evaluating My Prayer Life Compared To Paul's

1. Every one of these prayers were for others. Paul did ask others to pray for him, but we have no record of him making requests to God for Himself. When I consider my own prayer life, I would estimate that my prayers for others are ____ much like Paul's ____ 75% for others ____ 50% for others ____ Less
2. When I look at **the content** of Paul's prayers, and consider what He was asking God to do for others ____ I mostly see the same things I pray for ____ I learned a lot ____ I have a lot to learn
3. Paul's concerns for the spiritual growth of those he had assumed responsibility for seems to completely dominate his prayer life and they seem to be fervent and passionate. As I compare my own prayer life with this, I would say that ____ I pray just like him ____ I pray often like this ____ I pray mostly for myself and usually without much fervor.

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. There are a lot of prayers to consider in this study. What did you learn about prayer from Paul's prayers?
2. There are 4 different summaries of what Paul prayed in the study. Were these helpful in your own prayers? Did you use any as you prayed yourself?
3. How did your times with the Lord and your journaling go this week?

Prayer Together

UNIT 3 STUDY SESSION #2:

Our goal in these studies is to grow in our relationship with God by the maturing of our prayer life. Our ongoing project through these studies is to set aside regular and special times to **SEEK THE LORD IN PRAYER** and to keep a **PRAYER JOURNAL** of our requests and God's answers. Given the focus of this study of Paul's prayers, consider choosing one or more of the following projects for this week:

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

1. Meditate on one or more of Paul's 35 prayers every day before you begin your prayers to God. Pray as Paul did for the week.
2. Use the summary of Paul's prayers at the end of the study, every day this week, as you intercede for others on your prayer list.
3. Expand your journal as the Lord leads, that you may remember your requests while you watch and wait. (Mk. 14:34–39, Ps. 37:39–40)

Discussion Questions

Well, were you encouraged in your prayer life this week?

If you were able to pursue one of the projects for this week, can you share with us how it went?

Prayer Together

STUDY UNIT 4

1 Pet. 3:7 / Eph. 6:18 / James 1:5–8

WHAT WILL HINDER YOUR PRAYERS?

It may be surprising, but there can be many obstacles to your prayers themselves. We have a responsibility to have a healthy Christian life, so that our prayers will be heard by God. Your requests and supplications to God will be hindered if...

1. You Are Still “Going Solo” Some in Life

To the extent that we are not fully yielded to God’s will in our life, our prayers will be hindered. The word translated “hindered” (*egkopto* in Greek) in the verse below was used of “impeding something” or “blocking its path.” Here Christian husbands are warned that if they lower God’s standards of marital conduct, and do not live by them, **their prayers would be impeded, blocked, hindered.**

“You husbands in the same way, 1) live with your wives in an understanding way.... and 2) show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.”

1 Peter 3:7

The same consequences of hindering our prayers are to be applied to heeding all of God’s revealed truths, principles, and ways. If wives will not learn to be appropriately subject to their husbands, their prayers will be hindered too. If children will not honor and obey their parents, their prayers will be hindered, too. If Christians will not attend to fellowship, scripture reading, church meetings, their prayers will be hindered. And so it goes. A tepid commitment to God’s Word and will is perhaps the greatest hinderance to the prayers of Christians being powerfully answered.

The Apostle John uses “abiding” terminology to refer to our relationship with Christ which is accomplished through the presence of the Holy Spirit. A healthy Christian has a healthy, growing relationship with the Lord. It is a healthy Christian—an abiding Christian—whose prayers are unhindered. You may be “abiding” well in most things, but if you are still “going solo” in some things, still trying to do some things in your own strength, your prayers will again be hindered accordingly.

“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....

IF you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

John 15:4–8

2. Your Knowledge of God is Still Too Small

If you do not know God very well, your prayers will not be answered like they will be when you know Him better. A young child does not really know very much about his father. What are his father's goals, likes and dislikes, plans, character, thoughts on this and that, etc. If he doesn't know, what he asks for will mostly be rejected until he learns these things.

"Daddy, can I have a knife to play with." No, Son, you can't. "Why daddy?" Because I love you. But after some learning and maturing comes this request: "Dad, can I have a knife to help Mom with preparing dinner tonight? I will be very careful." Ok, son, here is a knife. Good job, helping out like I asked.

Do you know **God's plan** for history and His reasons for tolerating sin for a season? If not, how would you know what to ask for? Do you know **His promises** to His people which form the basis of so many of our prayers? Do you know the fellowship of **His presence** with the indwelling Holy Spirit and how He is grieved and quenched? If not, your prayers are hindered because your knowledge of these things is too small. To know what to pray for, and to receive answers to those prayers, you must know Him and consequently, His will.

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

3. Your Prayers Are Too Timid

God wants to change this fallen world. He already has a plan. He is waiting for intercessors to ask, because He wants to share His life and glory with them. We have learned what an answerable prayer is. It would be according to 1) His will, 2) His name (His character and values), and 3) His glory. Prayers with these qualities will be effective—if they are requests and intercessions made FERVENTLY to God. Remember that "the FERVENT and effectual prayers of a righteous man (Christian) accomplish much (Jas 5:16)." What is "fervent" prayer to God? **Fervent** prayer has the following characteristics, which are to be added to the three that make prayers effective. Fervent prayer is....

praying BOLDLY, with confidence, and
praying PERSISTENTLY, even before our Sovereign God.

Only some examples are given of each of the above, but more can be easily found.

1) Praying BOLDLY

Do you remember when Abraham prayed for wicked Sodom?

*“Abraham was still standing before the LORD. Abraham came near and said, ‘Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? **Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?’**”* Genesis 18:22–25

Doesn't Abraham know who he is talking to? His boldness seems remarkably daring—but he continued, and God answered. God already had a plan which included the prayers of a bold intercessor.

Moses was just as bold, just as daring. In Exodus 32, we are told that while Moses had been with God, the people had turned, stupidly and rebelliously, to worship a golden calf. God told Moses about it and that He was going to destroy them. “My wrath shall be great against them and I shall destroy them (Exod 32:10).” But in verses 12 and 13 we are told that Moses TOLD GOD that destroying His own people would ruin His reputation and that He would be breaking His Word and Promises! What happened? Well, one man interceded for millions of people and they were all saved from God's wrath, because He relented when Moses prayed for them. God already had a plan, but He was waiting for a bold intercessor. BE BOLD in your prayer life is the lesson.

2) Praying PERSISTENTLY

Jesus tells us this in His parable in Luke 18 about the widow and the unjust judge. This judge had no regard or fear of God or man, and had refused to give aid to the widow who had come to him for help. He said no, but the widow persisted. The judge was finally “wearied” by the widow's persistence, and gave her what she asked for.

*“Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, “Give me legal protection from my opponent.” For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, “Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.”’ And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge said; **now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?**”* Luke 18:1–7

Do you doubt that God will heed your prayers for justice, because of your persistence in coming to Him about the same things again and again? Why did He tell us this parable then?

On another occasion Jesus emphasized persistence in our praying with another illustration.

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

anything.” I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

Luke 11:5–9

Knock boldly. Ask persistently. God is waiting for you to do so.

4. You Are “Double Minded”

A “double minded” Christian is one who asks God what His will in a matter is, and then will decide whether he will do it or not. This immature “double-mindedness” significantly hinders their ongoing prayers because their arrogant independence leaves their prayers unanswered.

*“But if any of you lacks wisdom [seeing life from God’s point of view], let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For **that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**”*

James 1:5–8

Confession and repentance are required. Unless we are applying Mt. 16:24 every day, there will be limits to our submission to God’s will and our prayers will be hindered to the point of being cancelled.

*“Then Jesus said to His disciples, **‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.** For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”*

Matthew 16:24–25

Well, do you seek God’s will and blessing—conditionally? Have you drawn lines in life regarding what you will not do, things you will not give up, places you will not go? If so, and to the extent that you do – your prayers are hindered and ineffectual.

5. You Are Not “All” in

It is worth noting that in three separate New Testament instructions regarding our prayer life, the word “**all**” is used 4 times in each passage. The emphasis in all of them is that our prayers are to be **all** consuming, of **all** our thoughts and **all** our time, and encompass **all** the Christians in **all** the earth. Wow. Wow. Wow. Wow.

The first is found in Eph. 6, where prayer ends Paul’s instructions about our weapons and armor in our war with Satanic powers.

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord.... Put on the full armor of God.... Stand firm therefore.... 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 6:10–18

It seems to me that applying these 4 “alls” would make prayer the most dominate thing that I do in life. You may have thought that your prayer life was pretty good. But compared to this, are you “all” in?

The **second passage** pushes us even further, if that is possible. Notice again that there are four “alls” which support and combine with the four in the first passage in their meaning.

“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

1 Timothy 2:1–4

The first **all** in this passage (“First of all, then,”) could be better translated “as a matter of **first importance**”. When combined with the “alls” that follow, this means that our intercessory prayer life to God, asking Him to intercede in the world to change the things that otherwise would not, is the most significant and powerful thing that we can do in life. It means that you can change the world, the course of history, and all eternity—by prayer to God. Doesn’t it?

The **third passage** using 4 “alls” is found in Paul’s letter to the Colossians telling them how he is praying for them.

“We have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.” Colossians 1:9–12

All right, you all, are you all in, all the time?

Remember, that by God’s enabling grace, you can do all the things He wants you to do through the Holy Spirit who strengthens you (see Phil 4:13). Praying these “alls” is one of them.

UNIT 4 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group study, read and study the above material and then complete the following self-evaluation.

Evaluating The Things In My Life That Could Be Hindering My Prayers

To what extent am I **not fully yielded to God's will** in my life and heeding all of God's revealed truths, principles, and ways?

My lack of knowing God's person and His plans, power, and presence:

- Are not a cause of my prayers being hindered.
 Are not a significant cause. Except perhaps _____
 I need to grow to be an approved workman, accurately handling God's Word.
 Is a probable reason that God does not answer my prayers. I do not know how to pray according to His will, consistent with His character and values, in line with His plans.

For the most part I would describe my prayers to God as:

- calm and serious sometimes tentative sometimes timid
 usually confident and clear sometimes bold sometimes persistent
 definitely bold definitely persistent definitely both

As for being a person who will ask God what His opinion is in a matter, but will decide whether to do it until I know what God wants....

- I am not like this
 I am committed not to be such a person
 It depends on the consequences

Regarding the importance of prayer in my life at this point:

- I am devoted to it and do it unceasingly, practicing God's presence all the time.
 I recognize its importance and am committed to it.
 Prayer has not taken up very much of my thinking or time this year.
 Prayer is not an important part of my life.

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

Before we jump into the study, how did your week go with the Lord and your prayer life with Him?

Getting to this week's study on what hinders our prayers, which of the 5 areas addressed in the study caught your attention the most?

Other comments on hinderance #1? #2? #3? #4? #5?

Prayer Together

UNIT 4 STUDY SESSION #2:

Our goal in these studies is to grow in our relationship with God by the maturing of our prayer life. Our ongoing project through these studies is to set aside regular and special times to **SEEK THE LORD IN PRAYER** and to keep a **PRAYER JOURNAL** of our requests and God's answers. Given the focus of this study of Paul's prayers, consider choosing one or more of the following projects for this week:

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

In the times you set aside to be with Lord this week, talk to Him each day about one of the 5 areas identified in the study that could be hindering your prayer life. Make appropriate commitments in each of these areas and include these in your prayer journal.

If you have not done this for a while, asking one or two others, who know you well, what they see as your "remaining" weaknesses may be of help in removing any hinderances in your prayer life. Talk to the Lord about doing this. Make appropriate commitments and include these in your prayer journal (see Prov. 15:22, 11:14).

Discussion Questions

Did the Lord answer any of your prayers this week?

If you were able to pursue one of the application projects, can you share with us how it went?

Prayer Together

STUDY UNIT 5

John 17

CHRIST'S PRAYER LIFE

Christ's public ministry on earth was a brief three-year period. The gospels tell us that our Lord spent a good amount of this time in prayer. You will remember that He began His ministry with forty days of prayer and fasting, alone with the Father.

This began His habit throughout his public ministry, and which was probably to some degree done throughout His whole life, to arise early in the morning, often before the sun arose, to go fellowship with His father. Then, in the evening, we are told that He would often go to the Mount of Olives or another quiet place to pray. He was in constant conversation with His Father, just as He has instructed all of us, through the apostles, to "be devoted to prayer" and to "pray without ceasing."

Then, in the hours before the end, as He faced the cross, we have the wondrous prayer that we find recorded in John 17. In chapters 13 through 16 of John's gospel we find the Lord's parting words to His disciples (13–16) and then His prayer to the Father (chapter 17) as He finished His earthly work and faced the cross. The work of taking the gospel to all mankind—making disciples over the long centuries to come—was now to be pursued and completed by these men and their disciples.

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.... Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Matthew 24:14 / 28:19–20

Turning the work of proclaiming the truths of the gospel and making disciples over to the first disciples was a confusing shock to them. Christ explained what He had done for them and what they were now to do in chapters 13 through 16. Then He prayed to the Father regarding what He had done and asked Him to empower these men to do these same things for and through all the saints to come going forward in chapter 17. What are these things? Here are His prayers:

1. **That the Father would keep them from the evil one.**
2. **That the Father would transform them through His Word.**
3. **That there would be unity and love among God's people.**
4. **That the final victory would come with the wonder of its oneness and fulness of joy.**

We shall look at each of these to clarify them, but first, let us note that **our primary reason for studying these chapters is to identify how we, like our Lord, are to pray** for our own disciples and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

These chapters and Christ's prayer are a treasure and a wonder. The whole scope of God's person, plan, and means are to be found here. They tell us how to pray with power and confidence to the glory of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Notice what He emphasizes to His disciples on their prayer life.

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these will do; because I go to the Father. **Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do**, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."*
John 14:12–14

What does Christ mean when He mentions asking "**in My name?**" He means that when we pray to God, **we are coming to Him as a disciple of Christ, seeking to do exactly what He is asking us to do and asking for what our Lord Jesus desires.**

*"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, **ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you**. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."*
John 15:7–8

*"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that **whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you**."*
John 15:16

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. **Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full**."*
John 16:23–24

Now, let us look at **the primary requests** we find in Christ's prayer to the Father for His disciples and those of us who have believed on Christ because of their work. (See Jn 17:20) They teach us what we are to pray for as we serve our Lord. Before we do, pray this sample prayer as part of preparation for the coming study.

"My Father in heaven, I surrender my life unto You again this day to use me as You wish. I know that the Holy Spirit will lead me in Your will as I do this. Please may He comfort me in what I am facing, help me in what you have given me to do. May I walk today, not in my own strength, but may I be strengthened with all power by Your Spirit. Show me what my Lord has done in prayer that I may imitate Him. Amen"

1. **That the Father would keep them from the evil one.**

Our prayer life is to be seen in the context of God's battle with Satan, as Christ prayed for us.

"I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one."

John 17:15

This aspect of our prayer life is also an important part of the apostles teaching. Notice how Paul's lengthy passage on putting on the "armor of God's Truth" is set in the context of prayer for "**all** the saints, at **all** times, with **all** perseverance" against the forces of darkness.

*"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of **the devil**. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against **the spiritual forces of wickedness** in the heavenly places.*

*Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.***

*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 6:10–18

This passage is worthy of our study and use in much of our prayer time. It tells us of the forces we face, their strategy and tactics, and the means of resisting and defeating them in our prayers.

"Our Father, how helpful is Your Word in the midst of our pressures, our discouragements, and our defeats. Help us to put on the armor of the truths we find in Your Word, bring them to our mind, counsel us with Your eye upon us, and guide us in these battles we are facing in life. Help us to resist the forces of darkness and to stand firm for You in what you are allowing. Strengthen our faith, our hope, and our love for You and others. Amen."

Are you praying consistently through the "putting on of the armor" of truth for yourself and others? Satan's primary attacks are directed toward our minds. We are to be careful to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5). God's people often make foolish and damaging choices thinking they are doing the right thing. They have been deceived. We are to help them with **all** prayer, at **all** times, with **all** perseverance. For **all** of them.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of (mental) fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:3–5

"Our Father, hallowed be Thy name. Lead us not into temptations but deliver us from evil, by teaching us the principles of Your Word and empowering us to impose them on our thinking and our circumstances in life. Thank you. Amen"

2. That the Father would transform them through His Word.

"Sanctify them (set them apart) in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify (set apart) Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified (set apart) in truth." John 17:17–19

Our sanctification is a setting apart, lifelong, process, that conforms us more and more into the image of God, as our thinking, our decisions, and our character is changed by our yieldedness and obedience to the principles of God's Word and the leading of the indwelling Holy Spirit. As used in the New Testament, "sanctification" speaks of the separation of a believer from evil things and ways. This is God's will for us, is learned as He teaches and leads us by the Holy Spirit, and must be earnestly pursued by us.

*"For this is the will of God, your sanctification.... that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.... For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives **His Holy Spirit** to you."* 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8

This transformation of us into the image of Christ is accomplished, as the above verse indicates, by the teaching, leading, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit who has come to dwell within us.

*"I will ask the Father, and He will give you **another Helper**, that He may be with you forever; that is **the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you...But the Helper, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, **He will teach you all things**, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."* John 14:16–17, 26

*"But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another.... Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness self-control.... If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk **by means of the Spirit**."* Galatians 5:16–25

Our Lord asked the Father that we might be transformed into His image so that we could be like Him and share His life in eternal oneness with Him. We are to seek this in our prayers for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Do you know some who are trying to live life in their own strength? Pray for them. Do you know some who are immature in the faith? Pray for them as Christ prayed for you. Do you know some who have grieved or quenched the Spirit and need to confess and repent?

"Our Father, we pray for our brothers and sisters who are struggling with the temptations of the world, the lies of the devil, and their own fleshly and worldly desires. May they yield to Your

will and seek Your leading and power to say no to their flesh and choose to obey You and Your Word by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit that lives within them. Amen.”

3. **That there would be unity and love among God’s people.**

This desire of our Lord, that the selfless love of the Trinity for one another would be shared by us, is perhaps the dominate focus of His final teaching to His disciples and His prayers to the Father. It is to be ours as well.

*"A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**"*
John 13:34–35

*"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; **that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.**"*
John 17:20–23

There is a great contrast between the most immature church in the New Testament and the most mature one. This great difference, that is addressed so clearly in Paul’s letters to them, is that one of them was characterized by love for one another and the unity that came from it, and the other was characterized by division and strife with one another. They loved themselves.

These divisions and strife were abundant and dominate in the Corinthian church, while the Thessalonian Christians were praised by Paul as great examples of love, having become imitators of our Lord. As a result, they were known “not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place their faith and love had become known” (1 Thess 1:8). They are examples for us to imitate, while the spiritually weak and immature Corinthians are certainly not.

Our Lord’s prayer above was that all Christians throughout the entire church age would be characterized by selfless love for one another, which would be seen in their oneness and their unity.

The apostle John emphasized this as he lived and taught this as Christ’s apostle:

*“Beloved, **let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.**"*
1 John 4:7–12

To what extent are you praying that this selfless love characterizes you and others that you know and love?

“Our loving, forgiving, merciful Father, we ask that You would forgive us for falling short of being the example of You and Your selfless love of others. We ask that You would move in our hearts and bring a new spirit of unity and oneness to our fellowship. May we become useful to You here in this broken, divisive world, manifesting who You are by our love for one another. We pray also for unity and love to be seen throughout the world among your people. May their light so shine before men that they may see You and be drawn to the Savior who died for them. Amen.”

4. **That the final victory would come with the wonder of its oneness and fulness of joy for all who are saved by grace.**

*"Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, **be with Me where I am** (referring to heaven), so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."*
John 17:24

*"But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so **that they may have My joy made full in themselves.**"*
John 17:13

This is the final petition of our Lord's prayer. He asks that those whom the Father has given Him would be with Him in glory when their work on earth is done. If you still do not think that your prayers are very important in the grand scheme of the plans of a sovereign God, think again. Why would our Lord ask the Father for this? Isn't it determined that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord—for a Christian? It is. Then why would we need to ask that the Father would do this? Quite beyond our ability to comprehend all that is true of God is this truth that our prayers "availeth much" (Jas 5:16).

God wants us to share His life with us. We are to become "the fulness of Him who always has already filled all in all" (Eph 1:23). Please explain that to my small mind. How can we be the fulness of Him Who fills all in all. Why would He desire it and make it come to pass? Because He loves us. Explain that!

Of all the things God could have made for Himself—He made you!

Of all the things God could have given His life for—He gave it for you. Why?

Because He loves you!

Jesus our Savior desires that we be with Him soon in heaven so that we can share His life in all its wonder and fulness—because He loves us. He asked this of the Father, and He asks us to pray with Him for others, in His name, to the Father, that they might be with us in heaven, sharing the fulness of Christ's joy, and being, somehow, "one" with the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and all the saints, for all eternity.

“Our Father Who art in heaven, Thy kingdom come, and may many who are not yet saved be saved by Your grace, by Christ’s atoning sacrifice of His life, that they may stand with us before the presence of Your glory, blameless, and with GREAT JOY! Amen.”

UNIT 5 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group study, read and study the summary above and then complete the following self-evaluation.

Praying For Others Like Christ

I regularly pray for others that:

1. The Father would keep them from the evil one. ____ I do ____ some ____ not very often
2. That the Father would transform them through His Word. ____ I do ____ some ____ not very often
3. That there would be unity and love among God’s people. ____ I do ____ some ____ not very often
4. That the final victory would come with the wonder of its oneness and fulness of joy. ____ I do ____ some ____ not very often

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. Before we begin to discuss this week’s study, did God answer any of your prayers this week?
2. Regarding the first major request that Christ made to the Father in John 17, that His disciples would be kept from the evil one, do you have any questions or comments?
3. Regarding the second, that the Father would transform His disciples—any questions or comments?
4. Regarding the third, that there would be love and unity among Christians. Why has this declined in our country in recent years? What are the reasons it has declined throughout the church age?
5. Regarding the fourth, regarding the final victory over evil would come. Why hasn’t it? Does this delay, and the reasons for it help us in our own prayer life?

Prayer Together

UNIT 5 STUDY SESSION #2:

Our goal in these studies has been to grow in our relationship with God by the maturing of our prayer life. Our ongoing project through these studies is to set aside regular and special times to **SEEK THE LORD IN PRAYER** and to keep a **PRAYER JOURNAL** of our requests and God's answers. Given the focus of this study of Christ's prayer in John 17, consider choosing one or more of the following projects to pursue this week:

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

Choose one of the following projects to pursue this week and come prepared to share about it.

1. Add the 4 prayer topics, noted in the study, that Christ used to pray to the Father in John 17 to your prayers and journal record. Consider adding a broad, even worldwide scope to these prayers. Christ certainly had this perspective. You may find the prayers at the end of each of the 4 sections in the study helpful.
2. After John 17, Christ lived for a few hours. During this time, He also spoke to the Father several times in which we know what He prayed. Find these and meditate on what we can learn from them about our own prayer life.
3. Before John 17, Christ's public ministry stretched for about three years. He prayed often and many of His prayers are recorded for us. Find these and meditate on what we can learn from them about our own prayer life.

Discussion Questions

1. Well, how did your prayer life and journaling go this week?
2. If you were able to pursue one of the application projects, can you share with us how it went?

Prayer Together

STUDY UNIT 6

John 16:23–24 / John 14:12–13

YOUR IMPOSSIBLE PRAYER LIST

This Unit regarding your impossible prayer list, is placed here in our studies to have you come to grips with the fundamental wonder of prayer, and your personal responsibility and amazing power with it to change lives, history, and the universe.

Intercessory prayer is asking God to intervene supernaturally in the world to do what neither you or anyone else can. You can share the gospel with someone, but unless God creates a new nature within them, they will never accept Christ as their Savior and Lord. Likewise, you can teach a saved child the truth and be a godly example to him or her, but unless they are transformed by the Spirit they will never be mature in the faith.

What then is on your prayer list? Hopefully you are asking God to do things—otherwise it will be true of you that “you do not have (*the things you could have had*), because you do not ask” (Jas 4:2b). This would mean your impossible prayer list is too short and that your prayer life is too timid. And hopefully neither is your list limited to those things that God would describe as things you would “visit on yourself.” It should include some things you need, but not just these.

What is left? You are invited to ask for **impossible things**, things that will never happen unless God supernaturally does them. Remember, there are only three prerequisites for God to answer your impossible prayer requests. We know these from our prior studies.

1. **They must be according to His will.** It may be His will, but not His timing or method. We will not always know.
2. **They must be consistent with His character and values**, which is what “in His name” means.
3. **They must glorify God.** The glory of something is the visible manifestation of it. What evidence do we have that our Father in heaven is a Being of self-denying love? He sent His Son to give His life for us. Jesus considered us more important than Himself and died in our place. He was the visible manifestation of the Father when He lived among us.

So, what is the major point here? Get to asking God to intervene in the world to glorify Himself! He delights in the requests of His children. He has chosen to wait for us to do some of the things He has planned, with Him.

Why did God pursue Elijah when he ran away from Jezebel in fear for his life? It was a time of him being a man of “little faith,” and that after being a man of incredible faith. It is interesting that Elijah’s weakest moment of faith and prayer came right after what appears to be his strongest moment. He had actually asked God to call down fire from heaven at a precise time, in a precise way, for a precise reason, according to God’s will, name, and glory.

But notice what God asked Elijah after he stopped running in fear and was hiding in a cave.

*“Then he came there to a cave and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, ‘**What are you doing here, Elijah?**’ He said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts.’ [...] And behold, a voice came to him and said, ‘**What are you doing here, Elijah?**’ Then he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; [...] And I alone am left; and they seek **my** life, to take it away.’ [...]*

*“The LORD said to him, ‘**Go, return... and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram; and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel–meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.**’”*

1 Kings 19:9–16

In effect God was saying this to Elijah:

“What are you doing here Elijah? Listen son, serving Me here in this awful war on earth is not all about you. It is all about OTHERS. I have more work for you to do, and when you get to doing this again, I want you to be asking Me again to change hearts and history by intervening in the world. Get back into the war and giving your life for others in My name. Put anointing these kings and prophets on your impossible prayer list.

“There are even more things to do that I have long planned, but I have waited to do them through you. I want you to share My glory when everything is finished and we are in heaven. I love you, My son.

“Let’s go now. There are some things that still need doing. They will be impossible for you in your own strength. But put your sandals on and get back out there in harm’s way. As you go, ask Me for what you need to do the job. Make an impossible prayer list of these things and then talk to Me about it.”

Now, God’s plan for Elijah is not His plan for you or me. But He does have a plan for us.

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

John 15:16

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we would walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:10

God wants us to get alone with Him and ask Him what He wants us to put on our impossible prayer list. And then, as we pursue His plan and do our part, we are to ask Him fervently for the things on our list. And watch.

Some Impossible Prayer Listings

1. On Paul's List After the Thorn

There was a time, early in his Christian life, when Paul probably did not have a significant prayer life. He was used to getting things done in his own strength. So, he kept doing this as he enthusiastically pursued God's plan for him of proclaiming the gospel. What did God do? He gave him that thorn in the flesh.

"For this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave from me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.'"
2 Corinthians 12:7–9

Paul soon learned to do the work God had prepared for him in God's strength, provision, and intervention, and not his own. His impossible prayer list was started and grew. The miracles that attended his ministry were seen as God's work through Paul, his prayers, and the prayers of others. Paul had also begun to ask his friends to add his ministry for the Lord to their impossible prayer lists.

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

*"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, 1) that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and 2) that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints.**"*
Romans 15:30–31

*"Finally, brethren, **pray for us** that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you."*
2 Thessalonians 3:1

2. On Mandy's List (a true story)

Mandy's first child (of 5) was born with severe physical deformities and handicaps. The doctors said that few with his issues lived past their third year. He would never walk, talk, or be able to even feed himself. Raising such a child would consume Mandy's life and be nearly impossible itself, but doing so with joy, patience, and genuine love would really take—well, some amazing grace from God to do the impossible.

Why would God want such a thing? Well, He wanted Mandy to "Let her light so shine among men, that they would see **her** good works, and in so doing, glorify her Father, who is in heaven." She would be shining the light of God's character and love in the darkness of our fallen world. But, this would only happen if she could do the impossible.

If, sleepless night after sleepless night, diaper after diaper, meal after meal, month after month, year after year, she could shine forth with joy and even thankfulness, then God would do the impossible through her to reach many, many who would see the light of Christ. Some would be Christians who would be encourage and challenged. Some would be lost but get saved.

But God's plan was that it would take years, consuming most of her time and life. The tasks and trials grew ever greater as other children were added to them. Mandy learned to make an impossible prayer list.

"Help me Lord to face today. Help me to be an example to others and encourage them to rely on You and Your promises. Bring conviction and even salvation to some who are lost. May they see You in me and my family. Bring salvation to my children. I ask these things in my Savior's name. Please glorify Yourself, and Your Son, in me and through me. Please give me Your strength and power to stand, and endure, and love selflessly. I cannot alone. Amen."

The Most Important Word in an Impossible Prayer List

*"With humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of **others**."*

Philippians 2:3–4

*"But I have prayed for **you**, that **your** faith may not fail; and **you**, when once **you** have turned again, strengthen **your** brothers."*

Luke 22:32

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

Eph 3:14–19

*"I thank my God in all my remembrance of **you**, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for **you all**, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in **you** will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is only right for me to feel this way about **you all**, because I have **you** in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, **you all** are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for **you all** with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this I pray, that **your** love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that **you** may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."*

Philippians 1:3–11

*“Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that **to all whom You have given Him**, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that **they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**”*

John 17:1–3

UNIT 6 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group study, read and study the above material and then complete the following self-evaluation.

Evaluating My Prayer List And My Prayers

Regarding my prayers to God,

_____ I am convicted about what I am praying for. _____ Somewhat _____ No, I am not.
_____ I am convicted about how I am praying. _____ Somewhat _____ No, I am not.

I am making the following commitments regarding my prayer life:

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. What would be the difference between just a prayer list, and an impossible prayer list?
2. If we have prayed fervently for the salvation of some we care about, for a long time, with no results—doesn't this discourage us from continuing to keep them on our prayer list? Doesn't it discourage us from praying for other impossible things? Should it? Why not?
3. Mandy's prayer list was primarily for herself just to have God's help in responding to what she faced in life. Praying for others took second place on her list. Is this ok? Is it right?

Prayer Together

UNIT 6 STUDY SESSION #2:

Our goal in these studies has been to grow in our relationship with God by the maturing of our prayer life. Our ongoing project through these studies is to set aside regular and special times to SEEK THE LORD IN PRAYER and to keep a PRAYER JOURNAL of our requests and God's answers. Given the focus of this particular study, consider doing one or more of the following this week in preparation for our time next week:

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

1. Think through your family, friends, and church family and make a list of what comes to mind, of **the hardest things** some of them are facing or doing that are not God's will. Change will take a miracle, but God would be glorified. Put them in your journal and purpose to **spend time every day this week** asking God to intervene and change things.
2. There are some things you have not asked of God during the weeks of these studies. They have not been in your prayers or thoughts at all. Seek the Lord and ask Him who you should be interceding for that you have not been considering. Do some interceding every day this week if He gives you a list and **ask Him for some miracles**.
3. Sometimes God asks us to intercede for those we do not know and probably will not meet until heaven. He invites us to intercede for them, asking God to do impossible things. Read Eph. 6:18 and spend some time each week fulfilling this command.

Discussion Questions

If you have been able to pursue one of the projects for this week, can you share with us how it went?

Prayer Together

STUDY UNIT 7

1 Pet. 5:8 / Eph. 6:10–18 / 1 Tim. 4:7 / Lk. 4

THE POWER OF PRAYER IN THE INVISIBLE WAR

At this point in our study, we shall now address the necessity and power of intercessory prayer in the awful war we face against our adversary Satan.

*“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. **Your adversary, the devil**, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **But resist him**, standing firm in your faith.”*

1 Peter 5:8–9

Unless you are aware of the invisible war we are in with Satan and know how to use **both** the weapons of **God’s truth and intercessory prayer**, you will be a casualty more than a useful and decorated soldier as a Christian.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

*“Stand firm therefore, 1) Having girded your loins **with truth**, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, **which is the word of God**. 2) **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 6:10–18

Our goal in this study is to:

- 1) review the nature of **our battles with Satan**,
- 2) clarify **the importance of prayer** in these battles, and
- 3) learn **how to use the weapon of prayer** against Satan in conjunction with the weapons of truth.

1. Our Battles with Satan:

- **Satan’s Lies, Schemes, and Snares**

Satan is God's Adversary, opposing His plans for His creation and mankind. He seeks to lead every person to violate and oppose God's will through deception. He uses elaborate schemes, hidden snares, and counterfeit lies to deceive, divide, discourage, and destroy God's people and creation.

*"The devil... was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for **he is a liar, and the father of lies.**"*
John 8:44

*"If perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from **the snare of the devil**, having been held captive by him to do his will."*
2 Timothy 2:25–26

*"Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against **the schemes of the devil.**"*
Ephesians 6:11

- **The Primary Battlefield: Our Minds**

The war with Satan is fought primarily in our mind. Spiritual warfare is a conflict fought in the mind against the false concepts that Satan places before us against the truth. We are to examine every thought, compare them with what God has revealed to us in His Word, and deal with them as God wants.

"We are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5

We should remember that just as Satan first deceived Adam and Eve by deceiving them into believing a lie, so centuries later he attempted to cause our Lord to likewise believe his lies. The battlefield has always been people's minds, as Adam and Eve's, so the Lord's, and so every person's who has lived and will live.

"The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
Genesis 3:4–5

"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. And the devil said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.' And Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone."' And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"

"And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written, "He will

command His angels concerning You to guard You,” and, “On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.” And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘It is said, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.”
Luke 4:1–13

The key to success in spiritual warfare is becoming skilled in using the truths of God’s Word against the lies of the Devil. We cannot fight Satan unless we know the truth. As soldiers of Christ, we must engage in a lifelong study of God’s Word.

We are to **impose these truths on our thinking and our circumstances**, regardless of the consequences. We are also to **proclaim these truths to others** in whatever spiritual state they are in. We are to teach them to our children, stand for them in the world, teach them to the lost, and encourage one another with them, as we face the consequences of living life in this awful war.

One of these truths is that **prayer is the key weapon** that empowers the truth in the war. Truth and prayer are often found together in Scripture. We shall address this more fully later in the study, but first let us review very briefly by way of reminder the following points.

- **How Do People Get Deceived About Life and How to Live It?**

1. **They are not purposefully under God ordained authority.**

“Rebellion is as the sin of **witchcraft**” which exposes a person to the realm and power of Satan (1 Sam 15:13).

They must be taught the truth that they are to honor and submit to God ordained authorities. But if they reject this, they are open to the Deceiver who is looking for such victims.

2. **Their guard is not up.** They are not “taking every thought captive.” They are naïve in the war. They are not on the alert to the Deceiver and how he operates.

*“See to it that no one **takes you captive** through philosophy and empty **deception**, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”*
Colossians 2:8

3. **They have sinned and not dealt with it**—so they are under a burden of guilt and shame.

*“To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but **both their mind and their conscience are defiled**. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.”*
Titus 1:15–16

“In view of this, I do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.”
Acts 24:16

4. **They associate with the wrong people** at the wrong level of intimacy.

*“Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge. The wisdom of the sensible is to understand his way, but the foolishness of fools is **deceit**.”*

Proverbs 14:7–8

5. **They set worthless things before their eyes**, wrong entertainment, evil images and conduct, and their minds are captured by them.

*“I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart. I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; **It shall not fasten its grip on me**. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil. Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy; no one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure. My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me. He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house; he who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me.”* Psalm 101:2–7

6. **They have become embittered** toward offenders and God.

“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.”

Hebrews 12:15

7. **They have come to love “the things of the world,”** worldly counsel, worldly pleasures, and worldly wealth.

“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” 1 Timothy 6:10

*“For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because **the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God**; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”*

Romans 8:5–8

2. The Importance of Prayer in the Battle

- **Where is the battle decided? On the mountain of prayer.**

Does God need to intervene in our preaching, witnessing, and discipling efforts, or can we just speak the truths of God’s Word and see people born again, transformed into Christ’s image, and escape from Satan’s lies? God must intervene, and He has chosen to include us in the battle by being the third element in this incredible “triangle of prayer.” We ask God to intervene for others. He has promised, as we have seen, that if we ask according to His will, He will do it! The weapons of truth and prayer must be used together. **Like a bullet without powder is the truth without fervent and effectual prayer.** Charles Spurgeon was once asked about the

revival that was occurring at his church with thousands being saved and growing in the faith. He said, “Let me show you the power plant that we have here” as he led them to the basement where hundreds of church members were gathered, praying as they habitually did during all of the services. He was a great preacher of **truth** in a church of great **prayer**. Both are necessary. One of the clearest examples of the importance of prayer in our battles for God in this fallen world is the account in Exodus 17 of Moses on the **mountaintop** praying, while Joshua was in the **valley** using the weapons of war against the enemy. Where was the battle decided? **The victory in the valley was won by the intercessions on the mountain!**

“So Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.’ Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed.

“But Moses’ hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”
Exodus 17:9–13

The staff of God symbolized God’s personal involvement, and Moses’ “hands up” or “hands down” symbolized Moses’ intercessions to God—or lack of them. The battle was won because of Moses’ intercessory prayers to God, as well as by the efforts and sacrifices of those using the weapons in the valley.

- **Destroying Satan’s strongholds with prayer**

*“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for **the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses**. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”* 2 Corinthians 10:3–5

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”
Ephesians 6:12

Deception is deception. People actually believe that the lies they believe are the truth. The “strongholds” mentioned in the above verse are false beliefs or false belief systems that a person has accepted as true. Humanism is a false belief system. So is Mormonism. Believing that I can reject the commandments of God without consequences is false. Choices have consequences. Some are eternal.

So, destroying these false beliefs and replacing them with the truth is what we are tasked with. But prayer is needed to win these battles.

How can we help others escape the lies, schemes, and snares of the Devil? How can we help others escape from the deceptions, and attempts to divide, discourage, and destroy us? How are we to pray?

3. How To Use the Weapon of Prayer in Our Battles with Satan

There are **three primary commands** from our commander as to how we are to fight for Him in this awful war. All are essential. Prayer is one of them.

1. We are sent to **shine the light of our transformed life into the darkness.**

- *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* Mathew 5:16
- *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Matthew 28:19–20

2. We are to **speak the truth of God's Word directly to others** as God directs.

- *"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault."* Matthew 18:15
- *"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."* 2 Timothy 4:2
- *"We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."* 1 Thessalonians 5:14

3. Finally, we are to **PRAY FOR OTHERS.**

Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth... which is the word of God... 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 6:14–18

Go up on the mountain to seek God, and ask Him, according to His will, to interceded for others.

Here are examples of the intercessory prayers that God has instructed us to pray on the mountaintop, as we engage the enemy for the victims of Satan's deceptions in the valley.

- **We are to ask God to rebuke Satan's intervention into their life.**
(Eph 6:12 / Lk 22:31–32)

"Heavenly Father, we ask that you would **PROTECT** _____ from the Satanic principalities and powers, world rulers of this darkness, and spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places, and give them no place or influence in their life. Amen."

- **We are to ask God to draw them to Christ, away from deception and death.**

(John 6:40–44)

“Heavenly Father, we ask that You would **DRAW** _____, by Your truth and the leading of the Holy Spirit, to seek, with all of their heart, fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Amen”

- **We are to ask God to deliver them from evil and keep them in His name.**

(Matt 6:13 / John 17)

“Heavenly Father, we ask that You would **LEAD** _____ to:

- i. Seek the protection that comes from Satanic lies by honoring the authorities You have placed in their life by seeking their counsel and direction.
- ii. Seek to take every thought captive to Your truths as revealed in Your Word.
- iii. Seek and gain a clear conscience before You and men by seeking forgiveness and making restitution for their sins.
- iv. Seek to walk in life avoiding the presence and influence of foolish and corrupt people and activities. Amen”

Conclusion

As we finish our study, we should remember the value that God places on our prayers. The following scenes are from God’s revelation of the events of the final victory over Satan. Wonder of wonders, notice the place of our prayers.

*“And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, **which are the prayers of the saints**. And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.’”*

Revelation 5:6–10

*“Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to **the prayers of all the saints** upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, **with the prayers of the saints**, went up before God out of the angel’s hand.”*

Revelation 8:3–4

UNIT 7 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group study read the summary above and then complete the following self-evaluation.

Evaluating My Prayer Life In The Invisible War

1. Regarding **my awareness** of living in the constant presence and influence of Satanic schemes, snares, and deceptive lies:
 - It has been ___ very good ___ ok, but not too important ___ poor
2. Regarding my grasp of **the necessity** of intercessory prayer in this war:
 - ___ it has been poor ___ I have thought that using the truth was enough ___ it has been ok, but not fervent and constant ___ it has been good
3. Regarding **my actual prayer life** in this war:
 - It is ___ constant and fervent ___ sporadic ___ not very strong ___ poor

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

The material in our study is extensive and has three divisions. Lets address each of these:

Section 1:

- The study reminds us that the primary battlefield in our war with Satan is mental. What kind of experience have you had in this regard?
- The study lists 7 ways that people get deceived. What are your thoughts on #1 and deceptions that come when we are our own authority.
- Comments on any of the other 6?

Section 2:

- What do you think about the “prayer on the mountain” and “battles in the valley” concepts presented in the study from Exodus 17? Applicable to us?
- Consider the concept of being held captive by the strongholds built in our minds through the lies of Satan. What are your thoughts and experiences with this and the means of “tearing these strongholds down?”

Section 3:

- What comments might you have about this material on praying for God’s Protection, Drawing, and Leading others in this war?

Prayer Together

UNIT 7 STUDY SESSION #2:

In preparation for Session #2, continue with the other prayer projects that you have initiated in our previous studies as the Lord leads you, and consider pursuing the following project regarding our battles in the invisible war.

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

Plan a time(s) of intercession for those you know who are in a serious battle or already in mental bondage with Satanic deceptions. Set aside time this week to go. Note the lists of prayers provided in Section 3 of the study. Use them if they are helpful. Remember James 5:16.

Discussion Questions

1. If you were able to pursue the application project for the week, can you share with us how it went?
2. Other than the project for this week, what else happened in your prayer life?

Prayer Together

STUDY UNIT 8

Isa. 58:6–11 / Dan. 9:3 / Acts 13:2–3

PRAYER AND FASTING

Ready for a challenge? Fasting is linked in Scripture with prayer as an important element in facilitating our intercessions to God. Fasting is the setting aside of things in our life for a season to give more time and attention to something else. Biblical fasting is the setting aside of normal activities to spend time with God.

We are at the end of our studies on prayer. At this point we shall ask ourselves how much fasting we should do, if any, to spend undistracted time with God in prayer. Jesus often went off by Himself to be with God and talk with the Father. He did not take a cellphone. He already had a direct line, but He didn't want to be distracted. He had to concentrate on people and the things of life most of the time, but He regularly left everything to be alone with His Father.

*“And He came out and proceeded **as was His custom** to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. When He arrived at the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray.”*
Luke 22:39–41

Remember also that He was led of the Spirit, as He began His ministry, into the wilderness and a forty day fast. Fasting and prayer began it, were His custom during it, and were how He ended it. We are to be led of the Spirit too.

Why We Would Fast

1. To acknowledge the importance of self-judgment and self-denial.

“Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”

*“**Then** your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. **Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;** You will cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you remove the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, **and if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday.** And the LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.”*

Isaiah 58:6–11

Would you be willing to regularly set time aside from everything else in life to ask God to help others? Fasting that leads us to humility and self-denial, will lead us to intercede to the Father in prayer for OTHERS. And if it does, God promises to answer.

2. To seek the Lord and know His will.

*“You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me **with all your heart.**”*
Jeremiah 29:13

*“You will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him **with all your heart and all your soul.**”*
Deuteronomy 4:29

*“So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him **by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.**”*
Daniel 9:3

When many of the God fearing men and women in the Bible desired to know God’s will in a major issue in their life, they sought Him with prayer and fasting. Have you?

3. For deliverance and protection for ourselves and others.

*“Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, ‘The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him.’ **So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty.**”*
Ezra 8:21–23

Old Testament Examples

Fasting had a prominent place in the lives of many of the Old Testament saints and their seeking God and His will for themselves and others.

- a. Both **Ezra and Nehemiah** proclaimed fasts during times of national crisis.
(Neh 1:4; Ezra 8:21)
- b. **Esther’s** fast played an important part in seeking and finding God’s will and the deliverance of the whole nation.
(Esth 4:6)
- c. **Daniel** fasted and prayed until God’s messenger broke through enemy lines to bring him an answer from the throne of God.
(Daniel 10:3)

- d. **David** fasted when his child was sick and dying, also at many other times.
(2 Sam 12:16; Ps 35:13; 69:10, 109:24)
- e. **All Israel** fasted and sought the Lord and His will together. (Judg 20:26; 1 Sam 7:6)

New Testament Examples

- a. **Anna** “never left the temple, serving day and night with fastings and prayers.”
(Luke 2:37)
- b. **Paul** fasted for three days after his conversion and throughout his life and ministry.
(Acts 9:9; 2 Cor 6:5, 11:27)
- c. **The Early Churches** fasted as a regular and vital part of their corporate life.
(Acts 13:2–3; 14:23)
- d. **Jesus** practiced fasting and made it clear that His disciples were to do this also.
(Matt 6:16–17; 9:14–15)

How To Fast

In the Bible there are different types of fasts, but the normal fast is one that abstains from food but not water. Here are a few points to remember, that are found in the many good resources we have on fasting.

- **Shorter Fasts (3 days or less)**

1. It is important to remember to **always drink water** throughout your fast, especially if the Lord leads you to a longer fast, but also in a shorter fast without any food.
2. Drinking some juice for the first 3 days of a fast allows some to minimize the headaches they experience during this period, and for your body to more gradually shut down its digestive systems. Any headaches usually stop during this time.

- **Longer Fasts**

1. A healthy body can function for several weeks without incapacity or injury without food. The body will be living on its surplus fat and waste cells. It is only after many days, usually 40, that this process is complete. At this point the body begins to consume its healthy cells.

2. Most people will experience three phases during a longer fast. **The first phase** will be a time of hunger and a desire for food. This usually will last for only one or two days. After this, there will be little feelings of hunger and no strong desire for food. **The second phase** usually includes feelings of bodily weakness that last for a few days. Rest is recommended as these days are the most difficult, those not severely so. The easing of the weakness signals the beginning of **the third phase** which is marked by very little concern or desire for food and few periods of weakness.
3. The renewing of hunger sensations may return as early as the 20th day of a fast, but may not return for others until later, none extending past the 40th day without food. When this occurs it is a signal to begin to break the longer fast.
4. Breaking a longer fast by going slowly and carefully **is very important**. Coming out of the fast slowly, usually over a three day period, before solid food is eaten again, will keep you from severe stomach pain. Slowly introducing drink supplements and liquidized food, to allow your body, which has shut down its digestive systems, to “start up” again is essential to avoid this significant discomfort.

UNIT 8 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group study read and study the above material and then complete the following self-evaluation.

Evaluating My “Prayer AND Fasting” Life

1. My experience with fasting (*setting aside significant times to be alone with the Lord without people, responsibilities, distractions, and food*), since salvation, has been:
___ regular ___ irregular ___ not significant
2. My responsibilities in life:
___ would make a true “alone time” with God very difficult.
___ should not be a major issue, given where I am in life.
___ are not such that I cannot do this.
___ have not been an issue, because I have made these “set aside times” a priority.
3. After studying this material, my own sense of being called to special times of fasting to be with the Lord to intercede for others is:
___ not very strong.
___ I am convicted to ask the Lord what to do. I will.
___ I have been and will continue to make such times a significant part of my life.

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. Before we address the subjects and issues of this study, let's share our experiences with fasting? What have you done and learned?
2. What counsel would you give us from your experiences?
3. Now, concerning why we would fast and the 3 reasons the scriptures give us, what are your thoughts?
4. Do any of the OT examples of fasting given raise questions for you?
5. Any of the NT examples?

Prayer Together

UNIT 8 STUDY SESSION #2:

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

1. Get a copy of God's Chosen Fast by Arthur Wallis and read this short book which addresses all of the major passages in Scripture concerning fasting, and the experiences of many on how to proceed with it.
2. Purpose to fast for the first 3 days of the first week of every month going forward this year. Try to adjust your schedule to get alone with the Lord for at least one day each time.
3. Purpose to set aside one week in the coming year to be alone with the Lord to plan for the year, asking for His direction for you and interceding for those whom you are responsible.
4. Purpose to get up an hour earlier than you have, or go to bed an hour later than you have, 5 days a week, every week, for a month, to be with the Lord. Keep a journal.

Discussion Questions

If you were able to begin pursuing one of the projects, can you share with us how it went?

Prayer Together