

STUDENT STUDY GUIDE

HOW DO WE PRAY?

SESSION 1 – WHY DO WE PRAY?

SESSION FOCUS

Prayer is one of the most familiar practices of faith—and one of the most misunderstood. Many people pray regularly, yet still feel uncertain, frustrated, or disconnected when it comes to prayer.

This session invites you to begin not with *how* to pray, but with a deeper question: **Why do we pray at all?** Rather than approaching prayer as a religious duty or problem-solving tool, this study explores prayer as **relationship before request**.

The goal is not to master prayer, but to rediscover it as a living connection with God.

OPENING REFLECTION

Before reading, pause and reflect honestly.

How would you describe your current experience of prayer?

When do you find yourself most likely to pray?

What emotions—positive or negative—do you associate with prayer?

(You may want to write a few notes before moving on.)

SCRIPTURE READING

Read **Matthew 6:5–13** slowly.

As you read, pay attention to:

- How Jesus speaks about prayer
- What He emphasizes—and what He does not
- The tone of relationship Jesus assumes with God

Do not rush. Notice any words or phrases that stand out or feel challenging.

KEY IDEA

Prayer is not primarily about saying the right words or getting the right outcome.

Prayer is about **relationship with God**.



Before prayer becomes request, confession, or guidance, it is **presence**—coming honestly before God as we are.

PART 1: WHY DO PEOPLE PRAY?

People pray for many reasons: habit, need, gratitude, fear, or desperation. Often prayer becomes something we turn to only when something is wrong.

Reflection Questions

- When do you usually pray most often?
- What do people tend to expect prayer to accomplish?
- How has prayer sometimes felt like pressure or obligation?

Personal Notes:

PART 2: JESUS AND PRAYER

Jesus prayed often—alone, with others, in moments of joy, and in moments of deep distress. His prayer life reveals something essential about faith.

Reflection Questions

- Why do you think Jesus prayed so regularly?
- What does His example suggest about dependence on God?
- How does Jesus' approach to prayer challenge common assumptions?

Personal Notes:

PART 3: RELATIONSHIP BEFORE REQUEST

Jesus teaches His followers to approach God not as a distant authority, but as a loving Father. This shifts prayer from performance to relationship.

Reflection Questions

- How does seeing prayer as relationship change your approach?
- What happens when prayer becomes mostly about asking for things?
- What might it look like to pray without an agenda?

Personal Notes:



PART 4: BARRIERS TO PRAYER

Even when we desire connection with God, prayer can feel difficult or uncomfortable. Distraction, disappointment, guilt, or unrealistic expectations often interfere.

Reflection Questions

- What tends to make prayer difficult for you?
- Are there expectations you place on yourself when you pray?
- What fears or assumptions might be shaping your prayer life?

Personal Notes:

PART 5: AN INVITATION, NOT A TASK

Jesus does not present prayer as a spiritual performance. He invites people to come honestly, simply, and consistently.

Reflection Questions

- What would change if prayer felt less like a task and more like presence?
- How might honesty reshape your prayers?
- What would it mean to trust God with silence as well as words?

Personal Notes:

LOOKING FORWARD: BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

This study begins with openness, not expertise.

As you move forward:

- What do you hope prayer becomes for you?
- What posture do you want to carry into this study—curiosity, trust, patience?
- What is one gentle intention you want to hold?

Personal Response:

CLOSING PRAYER

Take a moment to pray—silently or aloud—for:



- Openness in your relationship with God
 - Freedom from pressure or performance
 - A growing awareness of God's presence
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OPTIONAL TAKE-HOME PRACTICE

This week:

- Set aside a few quiet minutes each day
 - Do not focus on saying much—simply be present
 - Ask yourself: **What does it mean to come honestly before God today?**
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FINAL THOUGHT

Prayer does not begin with perfect words.
It begins with presence.

God does not invite you to perform—
He invites you to **come near**.

Let this study begin not with effort, but with openness.

