



HOW DO WE PRAY?

AN 8 PART STUDY ON INTIMACY WITH GOD

Session 1: Why Do We Pray?

Prayer is relationship before it is request.

Introduction – Learning to Pray

Prayer is one of the most central practices of the Christian life. Nearly every believer knows that prayer matters. Yet many Christians quietly admit that they feel unsure about prayer. They wonder whether they are praying correctly, whether their prayers matter, or whether God is even listening.

The disciples of Jesus felt the same need.

Scripture: Luke 11:1

Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

After watching Jesus pray, they made a simple request: “Lord, teach us to pray.”

This request tells us something important. Prayer is not something we automatically understand. It is something we must **learn**.

Throughout this study we will explore the model Jesus gave his followers: the Lord’s Prayer. But before learning **how** to pray, we must first understand **why we pray at all**.

Prayer is not merely a religious practice. It is one of the primary ways believers live in relationship with God.

Movement 1 – Prayer Begins With Relationship

At the foundation of Christian prayer is a relationship between God and His people.

Many religions approach prayer as an attempt to reach a distant deity or to gain divine favor. But the Bible presents prayer differently. Prayer flows from a relationship that God Himself initiates.

Through Jesus Christ, believers are adopted into the family of God.

Scripture: Galatians 4:4–7

*⁴But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us **as his very own children** ¹⁶And because **we are his children**, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” ⁷Now you are no longer a slave but **God’s own child**. And since **you are his child**, God has made you his heir.*

Scripture: Romans 8:14–17

*¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are **children of God**. ¹⁵So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when **he adopted you as his own children**. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that **we are God’s children**. ¹⁷And since **we are his children**, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.*



These passages describe believers as **children of God**. Prayer grows out of that identity. We do not approach God as strangers or outsiders. We come before Him as children approaching a loving Father.

This is why Jesus taught his disciples to begin prayer with the words **“Our Father.”**

Prayer is therefore not an attempt to earn God's attention. Instead, it is the natural response of those who already belong to Him.

A healthy prayer life begins when we understand this truth: God invites us to come before Him not as performers, but as children.

Movement 2 – Prayer Is Not Religious Performance

Jesus warned his followers about a common misunderstanding of prayer. Some people treat prayer as a way to display spiritual devotion in front of others.

Scripture: Matthew 6:5–6

⁵ “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶ But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

In this passage, Jesus describes individuals who pray publicly in order to be seen and admired. Their focus is not actually on God but on their audience.

Jesus redirects his followers away from performance and toward authenticity. True prayer happens when a believer comes honestly before God, not when someone attempts to impress others.

This does not mean public prayer is wrong. The early church prayed together regularly.

Scripture: Acts 1:14

*¹⁴ They all met together and **were constantly united in prayer**, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.*

Scripture: Acts 2:42

*⁴² All the believers **devoted themselves** to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.*

The issue is not whether prayer happens publicly or privately. The issue is the **heart behind the prayer**.

Prayer is not about appearing spiritual. Prayer is about genuinely seeking God.



When believers understand this, prayer becomes less intimidating. God is not waiting for impressive speeches. He desires honest conversation.

Movement 3 – Prayer Aligns Our Hearts With God's Will

Another misunderstanding about prayer is the belief that prayer exists primarily to persuade God to do what we want.

But throughout Scripture we see that prayer has a deeper purpose: it aligns our hearts with God's will. Jesus demonstrated this in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Scripture: Luke 22:42

⁴² “Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”

In this moment, Jesus expresses his human desire to avoid suffering. Yet he ultimately submits to the Father's will. This prayer reveals an important truth:

Prayer does not always change circumstances, but it always changes us.

When we bring our fears, hopes, and desires before God, something begins to happen within us. Our priorities shift. Our understanding deepens. Our trust grows.

Prayer slowly reshapes the heart so that our desires begin to reflect God's purposes.

This is why consistent prayer produces spiritual maturity.

Movement 4 – Prayer Is Participation in God's Work

Prayer is not only personal; it is also missional.

Throughout the Bible, God invites His people to participate in His work through prayer.

Scripture: James 5:16

*¹⁶ Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. **The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.***

Scripture: Colossians 4:2–4

*² **Devote yourselves to prayer** with an alert mind and a thankful heart. ³ Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. ⁴ Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.*



These passages reveal that prayer has real impact. When believers pray, they participate in the unfolding of God's purposes in the world.

Prayer is often connected to:

- guidance
- wisdom
- protection
- spiritual strength
- opportunities for the gospel

The early church understood this connection deeply. Before major decisions or moments of ministry, believers gathered to pray. **Prayer comes before planning!**

Scripture: Acts 13:2–3

²One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.” ³So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way

Prayer does not replace action, but it prepares believers for action. It positions us to recognize where God is already at work and invites us to join Him.

Movement 5 – Prayer Depends on the Holy Spirit

One of the most encouraging truths about prayer is that believers are not left to pray alone.

Many people hesitate to pray because they feel they do not know the right words. But Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit helps believers in prayer.

Scripture: Romans 8:26–27

²⁶And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers^[a] in harmony with God’s own will.

The Holy Spirit intercedes for believers and assists us in our weakness. This means prayer does not depend on eloquence or perfect language.

God listens to the sincere cry of the heart.

This truth should remove much of the pressure people feel about prayer. Prayer is not about crafting impressive sentences. It is about opening our lives to God's presence.



Movement 6 – Prayer Forms the Life of the Believer

Over time, prayer begins to shape every aspect of the believer's life.

The Apostle Paul encouraged the church to live in a continual posture of prayer.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

¹⁶Always be joyful. ¹⁷Never stop praying. ¹⁸Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

This does not mean repeating words constantly. Instead, it describes a life that remains aware of God's presence.

Prayer becomes a rhythm that shapes how believers:

- respond to challenges
- express gratitude
- seek guidance
- care for others

As prayer becomes more natural, the believer learns to bring every part of life before God.

Prayer is not meant to remain confined to a few minutes each day. It becomes a way of walking with God through every moment of life.

Summary – Why Do We Pray?

The Bible reveals several reasons why believers pray:

We pray because:

- we are children of God
- we desire relationship with our Father
- prayer aligns our hearts with God's will
- prayer allows us to participate in God's work
- the Holy Spirit strengthens us in prayer
- prayer shapes our daily lives

Prayer is therefore not merely a religious duty. It is a gift that draws believers deeper into communion with God.



Reflection Questions

1. What has your personal experience with prayer been like up to this point?
 2. Which of the biblical purposes of prayer in this lesson stood out most to you?
 3. How does understanding prayer as a relationship change your view of it?
 4. What obstacles currently make prayer difficult for you?
 5. In what ways might regular prayer reshape your daily life?
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Practice for the Week

This week, begin building a simple habit of daily prayer.

Set aside **5–10 minutes each day** and pray using this pattern:

Praise – Acknowledge who God is.

Confession – Ask God to reveal areas where you need forgiveness or correction.

Thanksgiving – Thank God for specific blessings.

Request – Bring your needs and the needs of others before God.

The goal is not perfection but consistency. Over time, this simple rhythm will begin to deepen your relationship with God.

