

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 7: HOW TO PRAY

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Christian Life and Worldview. This series of lessons examines the choices and practices that are essential for Christian living. To live as the Word of God teaches us means we understand that the choices we make each day affect our faith. It also means learning to pray, practising the commands of God and learning to serve others. These are important lessons for understanding the practice of Christianity and how to live out our faith within our Church community.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 7: HOW TO PRAY

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The purpose of this lesson is to understand the significance of prayer, and how Jesus taught the disciples to pray. You will learn how you can experience unconditional access to God through prayer.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Our prayers connect us to God. It is vital for all of us to understand our freedom to come before God at all times with any request on our hearts. If prayer is intimidating for you, begin by directing your thoughts to God and talking to Him with short prayers throughout the day. We should also set aside time for daily prayer in order to develop this discipline. Prayer helps us to see things from God's perspective and to desire better things. Prayer truly changes us – and it is simple to get started!

GETTING STARTED

1. Jesus spent much of His ministry in prayer. He went away to be alone with the Father, even though He Himself is God. Why do you think Jesus spent so much time in prayer? What can we learn about prayer from His example?

2. Even though our freedom to come before God has been purchased by the sacrifice of Jesus, what should our attitude in prayer be? How should we approach the Almighty God?



STUDY

❖ **WHAT IS PRAYER?** Prayer is the act of talking to God, which may involve asking Him for something, confessing our sin, petitioning for help, sharing our thoughts, worship, praise and adoration. It can be done silently in our minds or we may choose to speak out loud. We can pray alone or in groups. Though we may feel prompted to pray when we face difficulties, prayer should be a regular daily part of every believer’s life.

❖ **THE LORD’S PRAYER:** Jesus demonstrated a commitment to personal prayer during His time on earth. He withdrew from His friends to pray, and prayed when He was with them. It was important to Him that His followers knew how they could pray to the Father also.

- In Matthew 6:5-8 Jesus gave instructions to the disciples about prayer. What did He tell them?

- Next, in Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus taught His disciples step by step how to pray.

<i>“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name”</i>	We should start our prayers with praise, honouring the name of God.
<i>“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”</i>	This is about surrendering ourselves to God’s will, recognizing that God’s plans and His will are more important than our own.
<i>“Give us this day our daily bread”</i>	It is okay to tell God about the things that you need or want (since you have already shown submission to His will).
<i>“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”</i>	This is an important verse, as it teaches us that forgiveness from God is reliant on our willingness to forgive others.
<i>“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”</i>	We need to make sure that we are continually asking God to protect us and keep us from evil.



❖ **PRAYERS OF DAVID:** There are many prayers in the Bible including prayers of Jesus and prayers of the disciples, but here we will consider the prayers of David. David’s prayers are primarily contained in the book of Psalms. Many people believe the Psalms to be poems or songs, but many of them are David’s prayers to God.

- Read through Psalm 25. Write down the verses in which each of the following takes place:

David worships God	
David surrenders to God	
David asks for something	
David prays for protection	

- Choose to read another Psalm or two. You can choose any you want (or try Psalm 63, 143, or 121). Notice that these prayers are often very emotional. What range of emotions do we find in these Psalms? Do they seem honest or fake? Does it surprise you that David prayed some of these things to God?

❖ **BEING HONEST WITH GOD:** David’s prayers are an excellent example of being transparent before God. Writing prayers as David did can be a good way to be honest with God about what is in your heart. If you are angry about something, or something great has happened and you are thankful for it, if you don’t understand a situation you are in and want to call out to God for help, consider reading some of the Psalms and writing out a similar prayer to God.

❖ **HOW WE SHOULD PRAY:** When we talk to God we should remember that we come before Almighty God, our King! There are Biblical principles about prayer that we should examine.

- **When should we pray?** Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and Ephesians 6:18 and write down what you learn.

- **How should we pray?** We do not need to adopt a specific posture or pray in a particular place, although some find that helpful. We should come before God with humility,



knowing that we have been invited to present our requests to God! Read John 9:31, 2 Chronicles 7:14 and Philippians 4:6 and write down what you learn.

- **What should we pray for?** Read the following verses to see what God tells us to pray for.

1 Timothy 2:1-4	
James 5:13-18	
Ephesians 5:20	

- **Will our prayers always be answered?** We can have confidence that if we belong to God, He always hears our prayers. God desires the best things for us and longs to do wonderful things in our lives, but we do not always know what is best. God has our good in mind, but sometimes says 'no' or 'not yet' to our prayers. We are instructed to keep asking and to ask in Jesus' name. The name of Jesus is powerful! Sometimes we do not receive what we ask of God because of disobedience, lack of faith, or because it is not God's will for us. Look up these verses and write down what you learn about prayers being answered:

James 4:2,1	
Luke 11:9-13	
Romans 8:28	
Psalms 145:18-19	

- ❖ **KNOWING GOD MORE:** Through prayer and presenting our requests to God, a miraculous thing happens! God can change us so that we want what is best, and helps us to know what He would have us do. The more we spend time talking to God and waiting for His response, the more we will recognize His will for us. Then we will know what we ought to pray for, and how we should live.



IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Prayer is the act of talking to God, which may involve asking Him for something, confessing our sin, petitioning for help, sharing our thoughts, worship, praise and adoration.
- ❖ Jesus taught His disciples to pray using a pattern we refer to as the Lord's Prayer.
- ❖ David prayed to God from a place of joy or distress. These prayers are recorded in the Bible and known as Psalms. David's prayers are an example of being honest before God.
- ❖ We should set aside regular time for prayer, as well as praying throughout the day. We should bring our own needs before God, as well as the needs of others. We should pray when we have troubles, and rejoice with thanksgiving when all is well.
- ❖ We can have confidence that God listens to our prayers, but we should know that God will not always answer every prayer with a 'yes'.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do you trust God to provide for your needs? Can you remember a time when God provided for your need when you prayed about it?

2. What things can hinder our prayers before God? Do you hold a grudge against anyone? Do you have an unforgiving heart? Do you need to ask for God's forgiveness for anything in your life? Are you fully submitted to His will?

3. Look at the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. Use this as a pattern, and write out the prayer in your own words. Think about other words you could use to express the same thing from your own heart.