

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 1: PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled Christian Disciplines. This series of lessons introduces the disciplines of a Christian life, including prayer, Bible study, as well as fixing our mind on eternal things. This is exciting content that should energize and renew the spiritual life of mature Christians and propel newer Christians into deeper faith. The material is practical in nature, yet focussed on the many spiritual rewards of a life devoted to God.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 1: PRAYER

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to enable participants to discover and practise foundational elements of effective prayer. They will examine what prayer is from a Biblical perspective and the elements of effective prayer.

LEADER'S NOTE

This lesson is about developing our prayer life. Praying together as a group can instruct newer believers in the words that we say and what things to pray for, but it is important to help participants understand that our prayers must be sincere, heartfelt, and authentic. There are no specific words to use in order to make God hear us. Model prayer throughout this lesson if you like. Praying before you begin teaching is always a good practice. If participants are nervous to pray out loud or have other concerns about prayer, try to set them at ease by suggesting things like praying in pairs and/or through Scripture.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ Share a time when you experienced an answer to prayer. When has prayer changed your own life or impacted people you know?
- ❖ What are some things you pray about regularly?
- ❖ The Bible is filled with instances where Jesus prayed. If Jesus was God Himself, what was He demonstrating to us by praying?
- ❖ Are you comfortable praying out loud in a group? Why or why not?

STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH

- ❖ **What is Prayer?** Communication is important in every relationship – especially our relationship with God.



- Prayer is personal communication with God. It does not require fancy language, only heartfelt words.
- Prayer is listening and responding to God as He speaks to us through His Word.
- ❖ **What can we pray about?** We can have a relationship with God that allows us to talk to Him about anything, at any time. We should pray about that which weighs heavily on your heart, as well as the trials that we and those around us experience. We can pray when we are joyful and excited and grateful. Prayer must be honest and from the heart.
- ❖ **Why Is Prayer Important?**
 - It keeps us close to God.
 - It glorifies God (John 14:13).
 - God commands us to pray.
 - Prayer is a significant agent of change. Through prayer, God moves in the world and accomplishes great things.
 - Acts 4:23-33
 - Matthew 9:38
 - Prayer enables us to overcome sin and temptation with the aid of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ **How to Pray:** The Bible tells us prayer involves our heart, spirit and mind (1Corinthians: 14:15). We pray to the Father in the name and authority of Jesus through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 15:16; Romans 8:26-27). As conversation is expressed in many different ways, so prayer can be expressed in different ways. Prayer often includes these elements:
 - **Adoration** (Psalm 147:1; 145)
 - **Confession** (1 John 1:9; Psalm 32:5)
 - **Thanksgiving** (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Psalm 107:1)
 - **Supplication - making requests** (Philippians 4:6, 7; Matthew 6:11, 13)
- ❖ **There are different ways that one can pray.** We may choose to pray alone silently, or speak the words out loud to God. We may pray with others either silently or verbally. When we pray with others we may wish to verbally agree with their prayers. We can also use God's Word.
 - **Praying through Scripture:** When we pray through Scripture, we use God's own words and speak them back to Him. We can personalize the verse so it's coming from our heart.
 - To practise, you could turn any of the following Scriptures into prayers to God: Exodus 15:1-21; Ezra 9:6-15; Psalm 145; Matthew 6:5-13.



- You can also use Bible verses to pray for someone or for a particular need. When possible in your prayers, praying God's Words helps you to know God's desire for something and pray that it would come to be. The following are a few ideas of verses you could pray for a friend or loved one:
 - That they live in accordance with God's plan for their life (Ephesians 4:1-2)
 - That they would lean on Christ in their trials (Psalm 46:1)
 - That they would trust in God's plan, not their own (Jeremiah 29:11)
 - That they would seek wisdom (James 1:5)
 - That they would be strengthened (Psalm 28:7)
 - That they would grow spiritually (2 Peter 3:18)
 - That they would have peace and not fear (John 14:27)
 - That they would receive healing and rescue (Psalm 107:19-21)
 - That they would have a healed heart (Psalm 147:3)
 - That they would know God and be saved (Romans 10:1)

- **Praying with Others:** We can benefit from praying with others in many ways. It helps us to learn how to pray, God has promised that he hears us when we gather together and agree on prayers, and it helps us to keep a habit of prayer when we are accountable to others. Prayer in group can happen all at the same time, or one at a time. We can pray for the needs of one another, or for one common need.

- ❖ **Reverence for God.** While God is our father and friend, we must never forget that He is the Almighty Creator of the world, and we must approach Him with reverence and respect. God is holy and we can only approach Him through Jesus Christ whose sacrifice washed away our sins.
 - We must humble ourselves and recognize the greatness of God.
 - We may wish to physically adjust our posture before God by kneeling or bowing our head. We may also sit or stand, but the posture of the heart is what's important to God.

- ❖ **How Often We Should Pray:** There is no formula for how long one should be in prayer each day; however, we have a Biblical example of rising early to meet with God at a special time and place. "And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he (Jesus) departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed" [Mark 1:35](#). In addition, [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#) encourages us to, "pray without ceasing." In this way we can have times of focussed prolonged prayer, as well as short times of prayer throughout the day when we are in conversation with God.

DISCUSSION

- ❖ Why is prayer one of the most important tools a Christian has for growing in their faith and bringing glory to God?



- ❖ Why is it important to show reverence for God and not take the privilege of prayer for granted? How can we show reverence for God when we pray?
- ❖ What can you do to work on your prayer life this week? Is there more time you would like to set aside for prayer, or a prayer group you could join?
- ❖ We often grow in our prayer life by praying with others. They help us to see how we can pray, what words we can use, and what to pray for. What have you learned from praying with others?

PRAYER

Close with a time of prayer. You may also wish to have participants spend time in corporate prayer for one another. As the leader, you can model praying the Scriptures by praying Psalm 145.