

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 1: PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple 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.

The Student's 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 DISCIPLINES

LESSON 1: PRAYER

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Prayer is a critical part of our Christian life and our relationship with God. The purpose of this lesson is to help you to discover and practice elements of effective prayer.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

This lesson is about developing and deepening your prayer life. When we use the words 'prayer life' we refer to your habit of coming to God in prayer at regular set times, and also throughout the day as you think of it or a need arises. Our prayers to God should not be recitations of empty words but rather sincere, heartfelt and authentic expressions of our inner most thoughts, desires, longings and fears. There are no specific words we must use in order to make God hear us, there is no trick or posture or ritual necessary – just directing our thoughts to God and addressing Him. You will grow in your ability to pray as you practice. Why don't you begin this lesson with a quick prayer to God to help you understand?

GETTING STARTED

1. What are some things you pray about regularly?

2. Share a time when you experienced an answer to prayer. When has prayer changed your own life or impacted people you know?



STUDY

- ❖ **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.

- Prayer is important for several reasons:
 - It keeps us close to God.
 - It glorifies God.
 - God commands us to pray.
 - Prayer enables us to overcome sin and temptation with the aid of the Holy Spirit.
 - Prayer is a significant agent of change. Through prayer, God moves in the world and accomplishes great things.

- Read [Acts 4:23-33](#) and [Matthew 9:38](#) and write down what can be accomplished through prayer:

- ❖ **HOW TO PRAY:** The Bible tells us prayer involves our heart, spirit and mind. We pray to the Father in the name and authority of Jesus through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As conversation is expressed in many different ways, so prayer can be expressed in different ways. Prayer often includes the elements of *Adoration*, *Confession*, *Thanksgiving* and *Supplication*.

- **Adoration:** This is praising God with phrases like “You are great and powerful, You are Holy and without fault”. How do we see God being adored in Psalms 147:1 and Psalm 145?



- **Confession:** This is where we agree with God about our sins, and admit our sins to Him. We can ask for forgiveness and the power to repent and change. Speaking the truth to God is liberating. When we keep our sins secret it is easy for them to grow and multiply, or to pretend that they are not so bad. God will convict us of our sins if we ask Him, and show us where we need forgiveness. This all happens through prayer. How do we see confession take place in and Psalm 32:5, Ezra 9:6-15 and Psalm 51:1-12? What does God promise us in 1 John 1:9?

- **Thanksgiving:** It is important that we express gratitude to God through prayer. We have so much to be thankful for, all that we have comes from Him! Thanksgiving changes our hearts as we pray and thank God. It helps us to focus on God's blessings and God's will, rather than our own circumstances. We can thank God for the day's blessings, for people in our lives, for answers to prayer, for what we read in His Word and anything else that comes to mind. What does the Bible tell us about thanksgiving in prayer in 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18, Ephesians 5:20? How do we see examples of thanksgiving in prayer in Psalm 107:1?

- **Supplication:** This is the act of making requests of God. We have needs in our own lives, and see needs in the lives of others. Praying for others is often referred to as intercession. We can ask for anything, remembering that God will give us what He knows is best, with His timing. What do the following verses tell us about asking things of God? (1 John 5:14, Philippians 4:6-7 ; Matthew 6:11-13)

- ❖ **DIFFERENT WAYS TO 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.
- Pick one of the following passages and read it as a prayer to God. You may choose to rewrite the ideas in your own words below. Psalm 63, Psalm 51:-1-12, Psalm 139, Psalm 42:1,5, Psalm 23.

- 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.
- ❖ **REVERANCE 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.
- ❖ **SPEND SOME TIME IN PRAYER RIGHT NOW:** Spend some time praying to God right now. You can make a list of things to pray for on this chart if it helps you think through your prayer. Sometimes writing out our prayers to God can help us organize our thoughts until we are more comfortable. Consider making a list of prayer needs and praying through them each day.

Adoration	
Confession	
Thanksgiving	
Supplication	For myself: For the Needs of Others:

IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Prayer is communication with God. It involves us speaking to God, and God responding to us through His Word.
- ❖ We can pray about anything that concerns us, and must be honest and from the heart.
- ❖ Prayer keeps us close to God, it glorifies God and we are commanded to pray.
- ❖ Prayer can change our hearts, and our world. It helps us to overcome sin and temptation.
- ❖ When we pray, we should consider prayers involve adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.
- ❖ We can pray in different ways. One of those is praying Scripture.
- ❖ We can pray with others or alone.
- ❖ There is no formula for how long or when one should pray. We should set aside regular time to meet with God, but also pray to Him throughout the day.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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

2. 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?

3. 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?