

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 7: HOW TO PRAY

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled 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. Include time to discuss these principles and how to effectively apply them to your life.

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.



CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 7: HOW TO PRAY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to understand the significance of prayer, and understand how Jesus taught the disciples to pray. Participants will know how they can experience unconditional access to God through their prayer life.

LEADER'S NOTE

Our prayer life is what connects us to God, and allows God to move in our lives. It is vital for every new believer to understand their freedom to come before God at all times with any request on their hearts. As they pray and read the Word of God they will become more conformed to God's will, and begin to pray for those things in keeping with His desires. Encourage participants to think about coming before God in prayer at any time with short prayers, but also to set aside time daily for habitual prayer, and thus develop the discipline of regular prayer. Model healthy God-adoring prayer that is submissive, worshipful, and honouring to God when you pray during lessons.

INTRODUCTION

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

- ❖ What is your prayer life like? How often do you pray? What do you pray about?
- ❖ Jesus spent much of His ministry in prayer. He went away to be alone with the Father, even though He Himself was God. Why do you think Jesus spent so much time in prayer? What can we learn about prayer from His example?
- ❖ 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?
- ❖ What are some questions you have about prayer?

STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH

- ❖ **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. It can be done 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 6:5-15 Jesus gives instructions to the disciples about prayer. He tells them:

- Not to be hypocritical
- Not to pray for public recognition or award
- That prayer is between you and God
- Not to try to fool God with empty praises
- To heed the instructions within the prayer

❖ **Following is the prayer that Jesus used to teach the disciples how to pray:**

➤ "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" Matthew 6:9-15.

➤ Each of the parts of this prayer has significant meaning. Let's consider their meaning:

- "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" V. 9. We should start our prayers with praise, honouring the name of God.
- "Your kingdom come, your will be done" V. 10. This is about surrendering ourselves to God's will, recognizing that God's plans and His will are more important than our own.
- "Give us this day our daily bread" V. 11. It is okay to tell God about the things that we need or want (as you have already shown submission to the will of God).
- "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" V. 12. This is an interesting verse as it teaches us that forgiveness from God is reliant on our willingness to forgive others.
- "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" Vs. 13. 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 they are also David's prayers to God.

➤ Read through Psalms 25. Highlight the verses in which David worships God, surrenders to God, asks something of God, and finally prays for protection.



- Choose a few other Psalms to read through. Notice that David's prayers are often very emotional. (You may choose your own, or try Psalms 63; 143; 121)

ASK PARTICIPANTS:

Why are these Psalms so emotional? What range of emotion 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?

TEACH

- ❖ **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 the almighty God, and our King! There are Biblical principles about prayer that we should examine.
 - **When should we pray?** We should pray at all times, but set aside special times for prolonged prayer. (1 Thessalonians 5:17, Ephesians 6:18)
 - **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, but know that we have been invited to present our requests to God! (John 9:31, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Philippians 4:6). We can use the Bible to help us pray, or we can present our requests to God the best way we know how (Romans 8:26).
 - **What should we pray for?** We are instructed to bring our own needs before God, (Matthew 21:22) to pray for others – those who are Christians and those who are not yet believers (1 Timothy 2:1-4), to pray when we have troubles (James 5:13-18, Psalm 145:18-19) and to rejoice and praise God in all things (1 Thessalonians 5:18, Ephesians 5:20).
 - **Will our Prayer 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 (Luke 11:9-13, 1 John 5:14-15) 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 on 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 lack of faith, disobedience or because it is not God's will for us to have it. (James 4:3, 1 John 3:22, Psalm 145:18-19, Romans 8:28).
- ❖ **Knowing God More:** Through prayer, and presenting our requests to God a miraculous thing happens! God can change us to want what is best and to know what He would have us do. The more we spend time talking to God, and waiting for His response to us the more we will know His will for us. Then we will know what we ought to pray for, and how we should live (Jeremiah 33:3, Jeremiah 29:11-13, Matthew 6:33).



DISCUSSION

- ❖ What are some of the components of the Lord's Prayer that we can include in our everyday prayers?
- ❖ 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?
- ❖ 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?
- ❖ What can we learn from the prayers of David in the Bible? Do we need to guard our emotions before God, or can we be honest before Him?

PRAYER

Close the session in prayer. Pray for all your participants using the model of the Lord's Prayer, substituting their names or the group name for phrases such as: 'give (this group) this day (this group's) daily bread and forgive (this group's) trespasses as they forgive those who trespass against them'.

HOMEWORK

For groups that meet regularly, assign the following work to be completed before the next lesson. If time or schedule allows, these activities may be done during the teaching time before discussion questions.

1. Write your own prayer in the spirit of the Psalms. Think of a situation in your life and write to God about it. Remember that God can see your heart so there is no use hiding anything from Him. This activity may help you to organize your thoughts and consider the components of prayer.
2. 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.