

Discipleship Bible Study Prayer Studies

Lesson Number One

The best definition on prayer is this: A talk with God! You are talking WITH God, not TO God. Prayer is a two-way conversation. It speaks of a relationship! There is a direct link in Scripture between a man's prayer life and the reality of God in his life. You can tell if God is real to you by the way you pray. Few today really comprehend the privilege we have of worshiping God in prayer.

Andrew Murray once said,

It is one of the terrible marks of the diseased state of Christian life in these days, that there are so many who rest content without the distinct experience of answer to prayer. They pray daily, they ask many things, and trust that some of them will be heard, but know little of direct, definite answer to prayer as the rule of daily life.¹

You ought to come to expect daily, direct, definite answers to prayer! Base your perspective of prayer on the Word of God rather than on the experience of men. Your attitude about prayer must be directed by Christ's teaching on prayer. Christ taught us about prayer. He gave us a pattern for prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. Read the Lord's pattern for prayer. What percentage of that prayer involved making a request of God?

What other elements of prayer can you find that did not include a request?

Christ taught much about prayer during His ministry. We will focus on three areas of study:

What does Christ teach about prayer?

What does Christ teach about the potential of prayer?

What does Christ teach about the conditions for answered prayer?

1st study

I. What did Jesus teach about prayer?

Read these verses. Write your own summary after each one.

Matthew 6:6.

*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret **shall reward thee openly.***

¹Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1981), p. 43.

Summary:

Matthew 6:8

*Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father **knoweth what things ye have need of**, before ye ask him.*

Summary:

Matthew 7:7,8

***Ask, and it shall be given you;** seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

Summary:

Matthew 9:38

*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that **he will send forth labourers into his harvest.***

Summary:

Matthew 17:20

*And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and **nothing shall be impossible unto you.***

Summary:

Matthew 18:18-19

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

*Again I say unto you, That **if two of you shall agree** on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, **it shall be done** for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

Summary:

Matthew 21:22

*And **all things**, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*

Summary:

Luke 11:13

*If ye then, being evil, know how to give **good gifts** unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father **give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?***

Summary:

John 14:13,14

*And **whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do**, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall **ask any thing in my name**, I will do it.*

Summary:

John 15:7

*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall **ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.***

Summary:

John 15:16

*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that **whatsoever ye shall ask** of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

Summary:

John 16:23,24

*And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Whatsoever ye shall ask** the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: **ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.***

Summary:

Lesson Number Two

2nd study

II. What does Jesus teach us about the ultimate potential of prayer?

Look up the following verses in your Bible. Underline these assurances in your Bible.

Nothing shall be impossible unto you(Matthew 17:20).

Anything that they shall ask (Matthew 18:19).

All things whatsoever ye shall ask (Matthew 21:22).

Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name (John 14:13).

Ask anything in my name (John 14:14).

Ask what ye will (John 15:7).

Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name (John 15:16).

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name (John 16:23).

WOW! Does God mean what He says? “We have become so accustomed to limit the wonderful love and large promises of our God that we cannot read the simplest and clearest statements of our Lord without the qualifying clauses by which we guard and expound them.”²

Assignment:

*Develop a prayer journal. In a small notebook record your:

1. Statements of adoration about God.
2. Prayer promises to claim.
3. Areas in which you struggle, needing God’s help.
4. Individuals for whom you are praying for their salvation.

Next to the statement or request leave a column to record how God has responded to your prayer.

*Use the “Discover God” forms available in the church lobby. Fill them out daily, then use them in your prayer time to remind you of truths about God to pray back to God.

²Murray, 5.

Lesson Number Three

3rd study

III. What does Jesus teach us about the condition of answers to prayer?

If you listen to the weather reports, you begin to notice patterns that develop. In Colorado Springs, Colorado, the people are accustomed to watching for the "Albuquerque Low." In the "Albuquerque Low," a low pressure sets up over Albuquerque New Mexico which brings moisture up from the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico into southern Colorado. If cooler air comes in from the north over the mountains this "Albuquerque Low" can hit Colorado Springs with more than two feet of snow. For certain events to take place, you need to have conditions that are just right.

For prayer to be powerful, conditions need to be just right. We are talking about a holy condition of prayer! Sometimes we mess up the conditions! The Holy Spirit is still in the world; the power which Jesus promised is yet within our reach, but we can attain it only by cleansing our lives, humbling our hearts and seeking God's face. This will call for prayer--real, intense, persistent, agonizing prayer!

What makes for the right conditions for prayer?

Read John 15:7

Examine Christ's instruction on prayer.

How does Jesus instruct us to pray? That will show us the right conditions

Three expectations Christ gave for us to see effective prayer:

First expectation:

Christ expects us to abide.

John 15:7 *If ye abide . . .*

In Palestine, grape vines are trimmed back each year to a single thick vine about 4 feet high. At the top is a big knot about the size of your fist. Out of this knot comes all the new branches. Each branch is single and roots directly into the main vine.

What can that picture teach you about abiding in the vine?

How can you know if you are abiding? Read I John 3:24

There are two ways to know if you are abiding in Christ.

1. You can know you're abiding if you are obeying !

What is God speaking to you about to which you are not responding? What are some areas God is prompting you to obey? Read Psalm 66:18. What does that verse say about hindrances to prayer?

2. You can know if you're abiding if you are thinking like God thinks.

How can you begin to think like God thinks?

Read Philippians 4:8.

Second Expectation:

Christ expects us to ask.

Ye shall ask (indicative mood--statement of fact) (John 15:7).

Ask and it shall be given you . . . (Matthew 7:7).

How should we ask?

Christ taught that we should:

1. Ask again and again

There is a wrong way; there is a right way. *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking* (Matthew 6:7). An example of the wrong kind of repetition is with the Rosary. The Roman Catholic Church has three levels of worship. They use the worship of Deity (the latria). They use the worship of Mary (the hyperdulia). They have the worship of other saints (the dulia). If you are familiar with the Rosary, you will remember that in the repetition of the Rosary the majority of the prayer is directed to Mary. These are the "Hail Mary's." In the Hail Mary the statement is made: "Hail Mary, full of grace and truth. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women. Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." In the completion of one cycle of the Rosary the Hail Mary is repeated 50 times. In what ways does the Rosary demonstrate "vain" repetitions?

Right way: *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you* (Matthew 7:7). The present tense of the word "ask" speaks of continuous action. In other words, if you are convinced that something is in the will of God, keep on asking!

2. Ask in His Authority

Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you (John 15:16).

Asking in His name . . . You can pray with Christ's authorization. "You can use my name." However, praying in Christ's name also has stipulations. It does not mean you pray for what you want; it means you pray for what God wants. How are you going to know if it is something that God wants? Ask and Abide!

3. Ask in agreement

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 18:19). Agree is the Greek word *sumphoni-*
What can you apply from that word?

Pray with several other prayer partners on a regular basis. Make sure your heart is right toward God and toward them. Matthew 18:19 gives you an amazing promise. Read it again.

What does "anything" mean?

What is the one condition given in Matthew 18:19?

4. Ask accordingly

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us (1 John 5:14). This means that we are not praying according to our own aspirations like the mother of John and James did. She was asking for the chief seats in the kingdom for her sons (Matthew 20:20). What was wrong about her request?

Read James 4:3. What does that verse teach you about selfish prayer?

This means that we are praying according to God's Word! Taking God's promises at His word! Place your finger on the verse and pray that verse back to God.

Most people don't know how to take God's promises.

*Some of God's promises are very specific.

What are God's specific promises in:

James 1:5

Philippians 4:6,7

I Peter 5:7

*Some of God's promises require careful application of a Bible principle.

What principles of God's Word can you apply in these verses?

Psalm 81:10

Philippians 4:19 (Be sure to include the context.)

Matthew 18:21,22

Isaiah 54:2,3

*Some of God's promises may have a providential preclusion.

Sometimes, God prevents what we've requested because he has a better answer.

Jim and Elizabeth Elliot went to South America as part of a team of five missionary couples. They were preparing to go into the interior to give the gospel to the Auca Indians. These Indians were cannibals. No white man had ever been there before. The team of missionaries repeatedly PRAYED FOR SAFETY.

After repeated attempts to make contact with the Aucas by lowering goods and valuables to the tribesmen, the five male missionaries on a Sunday afternoon at 12:30 called back to the home base. They were excited. They were ready to land the plane and actually speak to the natives. They said that they'd call back at 4:30 that afternoon. The call never came. At 3:12 the missionaries were savagely murdered.

Cornell Capa (*Life* photographer) speaks of an interview he had with Elisabeth Elliot. "I wondered how Betty could reconcile Jim's death at the hands of the Aucas and the Lord's **apparent failure** to protect him from them. Her answer came back without hesitation:

I prayed for the protection of Jim, that is, physical protection. The answer the Lord gave **transcended** what I had in mind. He gave protection from disobedience and through Jim's death accomplished results the magnitude of which only eternity can show.³

The providential preclusion transcends the request. God often says, "I want to do far more with your prayer request than you could ever dream, so I'm going to step in and change things. Just watch how much more I can do with your prayer than you ever dreamed!" Read II Corinthians 12:8-10. Why did God answer "no"?

Third Expectation

Christ expects us to anticipate an answer. Your response to His answer reveals your faith. Read John 15:7 again. What is the promise given?

How many times have we prayed about things, only to forget that we ever prayed. Look for the answer. *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them* (Mark 11:24).

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive (Matthew 21:22).

*Use the "Discover God" forms available in the church lobby. Fill them out daily, then use them in your prayer time to remind you of truths about God to pray back to God.

³Elisabeth Elliot, *The Savage My Kinsman* (New York, NY: Harper, 1961), 9.

