

PRAYER

Good Shepherd
Sermon-Based Study Guide
Matthew 6:5-8 | Jan 4, 2026
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week, we begin a new series focused on one of the most basic, and most challenging practices of the Christian life: prayer. Nearly every Christian agrees that prayer is important, yet many of us struggle to pray consistently, honestly, or with confidence.

In Matthew 6, Jesus assumes that his followers *will* pray. He does not say *if* you pray, but *when* you pray. This study invites us to step back and ask a foundational question: Why should we pray at all? If God already knows what we need, what difference does prayer make? As we explore Scripture together, we'll see that prayer is not about changing God's character—but about shaping our hearts, our trust, and our relationship with Him.

II. Connecting with One Another

When do you usually find yourself praying the most? Is it in the morning, late at night, driving, or only when something goes wrong?

III. Study the Text

Read Matthew 6:5–8

- What misunderstandings about prayer is Jesus Christ correcting in these verses?
- Why do we so easily turn prayer into either a performance for others or a formula to get results?
- If the Father already knows what we need, what does that tell us about the true purpose of prayer?

Read Luke 18:1, Philippians 4:6, James 5:13, Colossians 4:2

- *What do these passages reveal about how central prayer is to the Christian life?*
- *Why do you think Scripture commands prayer rather than merely suggesting it?*

Read Matthew 26:36–46 (Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane).



- Jesus asks for the cup to pass, and it doesn't. Have you ever prayed for something specific that God didn't seem to answer the way you hoped?
- Jesus is honest about what he wants and submits to the Father's will. Which part do you find harder in prayer, being honest about your desire, or trusting God with the outcome?

IV. Reflect and Respond

"One might pray and not be a Christian, but one cannot be a Christian and not pray." -RC Sproul

- What do you think that means?
- If prayer doesn't change God's character or plans, in what ways does prayer change us?
- Where do you tend to drift, praying only in crisis, praying out of habit, or avoiding prayer altogether?
- What would it look like for prayer to become more relational and less transactional in your life?

V. Prayer

- Thank God that He already knows your needs and invites you to come anyway.
- Confess any ways prayer has become performative, rushed, or neglected.
- Ask God to deepen your trust and desire to pray, not out of obligation, but relationship.
- Pray for one another to grow in consistency, honesty, and confidence before God.

VI. Digging Deeper

Read Exodus 32:9–14. After Israel's rebellion with the golden calf, Moses pleads with God on behalf of the people.

- What arguments does Moses make in his prayer?
- What does this passage teach us about intercession and God's relationship with His people?

Read Jonah 3:1–10 and Jonah 4:1–4. When the people of Nineveh repent, Jonah is angry that God spares them.

- What does Jonah believe about God's character that leads him to flee in the first place?
- Why is Jonah so upset when God shows mercy?
- How does this story challenge our assumptions about justice, mercy, and unanswered—or unexpectedly answered—prayer?

