

5 WEEKS

# A Praying Life



**Prayer is one of the most powerful ways we connect with God, but it's also one of the most misunderstood aspects of faith. In this series, we'll dive deep into the heart of prayer, exploring how to pray, how to hear from God, and how to invite the Holy Spirit into our lives.**

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# How to Pray

week 1

## SMALL GROUP STUDY

### Kicking It Off:

- What is your experience with prayer?
- What excites you, and what seems daunting about establishing a regular rhythm of prayer in your life?

### Big Idea:

Prayer is about worship, surrendering to God's will, relying on His provision, aligning our hearts with His, resisting what is evil, and trusting God in everything. Prayer is relational.

### Key Scriptures:

Luke 11:1-13

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

*He said to them, "When you pray, say:*

*"Father,*

*hallowed be your name,*

*your kingdom come.*

*Give us each day our daily bread.*

*Forgive us our sins,*

*for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.*

*And lead us not into temptation."*

*Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are*

*in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.*

*"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

### **Group Challenge:**

During group, section out time for everyone to do a guided prayer on their own. Use the Lord's Prayer as a template.

### **Discussion:**

1. Before doing this guided prayer experience, what was your understanding of the Lord's Prayer?
2. What did you learn through the guided prayer experience?
3. What did you hear God saying to you during your time of prayer?
4. Which principles of the Lord's Prayer are like your usual prayers? Which section(s) are elements of prayer you would like to incorporate more?

### **Memory Verse:**



Rejoice always,  
pray continually,  
give thanks in all  
circumstances; for  
this is God's will for  
you in Christ Jesus.



1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

# The Lord's Prayer - Prayer Guide

The Lord's Prayer is often recited in churches or at religious events, but there's so much more to this prayer. Jesus provided this model as an outline to teach us how to pray in a way that connects us to God, aligns our priorities with His, and helps us live dependently on Him. This model takes us through each part of The Lord's Prayer, showing us how to pray the way Jesus instructed.

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray..." Luke 11:1*

*"...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 forgive our debtors.*

*And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

*For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."*

*Matthew 6:9-13 NKJV*

## Connect With God Relationally

*"Our Father in Heaven..."*

*So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when He adopted you as His own children. Now we call Him, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:15 NLT*

God loves for us to come to Him in this way—as His children who love Him and want to spend time with Him. Proclaim your personal relationship with God, addressing Him as your loving Father and thanking Him that you are His child.



## Worship His Name

*"...Hallowed be Your name..."*

There is power in God's name. Here is a list of some of His names to help us worship Him specifically and personally:

- God is Righteousness—He makes me clean
- God is Sanctifier—He has called me and set me apart
- God is Healer—He heals all my diseases
- God is Banner of Victory—He defeated my enemies
- God is Shepherd—He speaks to me and leads me
- God is Peace—He gives my soul rest and makes me whole
- God is Provider—He supplies all of my needs

*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe. Proverbs 18:10 ESV*

When we proclaim who He is, we not only worship Him, but we also remind ourselves how powerful and great He is.



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## Pray His Agenda First

*"...Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven..."*

We know God's will is perfect, and we acknowledge His wisdom and sovereignty when we pray His agenda first.

*He will always give you all you need from day to day if you will make the Kingdom of God your primary concern. Luke 12:31 TLB*

Spend time focusing on what God is focused on.

His priorities include:

- The whole world to know Jesus
- Blessing for those in authority—parental, spiritual, governmental, work-related, school
- Caring for the poor
- The Church around the world
- Freedom for those in bondage
- Accomplishing His purpose in our lives

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## Depend on Him for Everything

*"...Give us this day our daily bread..."*

God promises to supply all our needs, and He wants us to trust Him to provide.

*I look up to the mountains—does my help come from there? My help comes from the Lord, who made Heaven and earth! Psalm 121:1-2 NLT*

Ask God for what you need today. Bring your requests to Him, and trust Him enough to hand them over to Him fully. It may help to open your hands before God to physically show your surrender to Him. Problems can either be ours or God's; they can't be both.

### 10 PRAYER FOCUSES

- Faith Life
- Marriage/Dating Life
- Family Life
- Work/School Life
- Ministry Life
- Financial Life
- Physical Life
- Social Life
- Attitudinal Life
- Emotional /Mental Life

## Forgive and Be Forgiven

*"...Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors..."*

When we turn away from our sins and receive His forgiveness, our hearts are more prepared to forgive others as well.

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* 1 John 1:9

Ask God to check your heart and life and show you areas where you might need to ask for His forgiveness. Ask Him to forgive you and to help you forgive others. We can even choose to forgive people in advance!

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## Engage in Spiritual Warfare

*"...And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one..."*

The Bible makes it clear that we have an enemy who is trying to steal from us, kill us, and destroy us. As we pray, we take our stand against the enemy and fight from a place of victory through Jesus as we're empowered by His Holy Spirit. There is power in God's Word, and every lie the enemy has told us can be replaced with God's truth.

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* Ephesians 6:12

Ask God to show you any lies you're believing or spiritual warfare happening in your life, expose the enemy, and help you understand and receive His truth. Simply speaking the name of Jesus has great power in the spiritual realm. The Bible tells us in James 4:7 that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. Through prayer, we can resist him and walk forward in freedom.

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## Express Faith in God's Power

*"...For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever..."*

Ending our prayer time by claiming God's authority and power helps focus our minds on the truth and hope of who He is and what He can do.

*"Ah, Sovereign LORD, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You."* Jeremiah 32:17

Remind yourself of God's power and then return to praising Him and declaring your faith in Him:

- "Yours is the Kingdom" – all authority belongs to You
- "Yours is the Power" – all mightiness flows from You
- "Yours is the Glory" – Your victory will be complete

# Prayer in Busyness

week 2

## SMALL GROUP STUDY

### Kicking It Off:

- What is something you are grateful for today?
- What are some ways you regularly practice gratitude in your life?

### Big Idea:

1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray continually." When we learn to pray continuously, we will find that prayer accesses both power and peace.

### Key Scriptures:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

### Discussion:

1. What do you think it means to pray continually? As you think about that idea, what is your response to it?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. What does it look like to

rejoice always? How can you return to joy regularly?

3. Prayer is the medium through which we communicate and commune with God. How do you often find yourself using prayer? What are some ways that you can challenge yourself to use it to both better communicate your desires, wants, and needs, as well as to listen and build relationship with God?
4. Our verses for today tell us to, "Give thanks in all circumstances." What do you think this looks like?

### Group Challenge:

Commit to the 7 Day Back-to-School Prayer Challenge.

### Memory Verse:

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



## 7 DAY BACK TO SCHOOL PRAYER CHALLENGE

Commit to praying every day for 7 days.

### Day 1 – Safety

Pray for students, teachers, and parents to be safe and feel safe. Pray that the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, would guard their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 1:7

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

### Day 2 – Students

Pray for a spirit of unity among our students, so they can love each other well. Pray that they would have a desire to learn and grow.

Jeremiah 29:11

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

### Day 3 – Students with Special Needs

Pray that our students with special needs will experience God’s love through their teachers and through their peers. Pray for a smooth transition into the new school year.

Philippians 4:13

*I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

### Day 4 – Faculty

Pray that faculty (teachers, administrators, lunch and janitorial staff, coaches, etc.) would be equipped to pour into each individual student. Pray that they would see each student and care for them right where they are.

Proverbs 3:5-6

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

## 7 DAY BACK TO SCHOOL PRAYER CHALLENGE

### Day 5 – Parents

Pray for parents to be rooted in wisdom and understanding, making the most of their days as the number one spiritual influence in their children's lives.

Isaiah 41:10

*"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."*

### Day 6 – Knowledge

Pray our students and faculty will seek Godly knowledge as they return to school. May they seek His will in their understanding. Help them to make decisions that are in line with Godly principles.

Colossians 3:23-24

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

### Day 7 – Identity

Pray students and staff know that their worth is in Jesus and not what the world teaches. May each one be encouraged by God's eternal promises and feel the comfort and peace that can only be found in Jesus.

Psalms 119:105

*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*



# Come Holy Spirit

week 3

## SMALL GROUP STUDY

### Kicking It Off:

- How have you seen God working in your life this week?
- In what areas of your life would you like to involve God more?

### Big Idea:

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit prays for us. We can practice letting Him lead us in our prayers.

### Key Scriptures:

John 17:3

*Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

John 16:13-14

*But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.*

1 Corinthians 14:1-3

*Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.*



## Discussion:

1. Have you ever heard or been taught that Holy Spirit prays on our behalf? What do you think this means?
2. Read John 16:13-14. The Holy Spirit will guide us, but we must practice waiting and listening. In your prayer life, do you ever ask for guidance? What do you do after making that request?
3. When you think about the Holy Spirit speaking to you, what do you anticipate it will sound like? How will you discern what is from the Spirit and what is not?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-3. When the Holy Spirit speaks to you, it will be strengthening, encouraging, and comforting. The Spirit brings conviction, not condemnation. Does any of this surprise you? How does this change your perspective on the Holy Spirit guiding you?

## Group Challenge:

Partake in the prayer walk. You can do this together as a group and reconvene on how it went after, or you can do it on your own this week and share about it at your next group meeting.

## Memory Verse:



Rejoice always,  
pray continually,  
give thanks in all  
circumstances; for  
this is God's will for  
you in Christ Jesus.



1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

*Prayer Walk* →

### Helpful Tips to Walk and Pray

- Verbally invite Jesus to join you.
- Take a scripture with you and memorize it.
- Read a psalm several times over.
- Listen to a worship song.
- Look for God in His creation, giving Him the glory as the Creator.
- Take time to listen.
- Share your worries, fears, frustrations, anxieties, challenges, and struggles.
- Take time to pray for anyone you see to experience Christ.
- Reflect on your life, your family and offer everything into Christ's hands.
- Repeat a simple one sentence prayer ~ below is a list to get you started.



Lord, fill my soul with Your peace

Father, fill my heart with Your love

Holy Spirit, fill me with Your joy

Teach me to listen to Your voice  
today

Help me understand Your will

Open my eyes to see You

Protect my mind, soul, and spirit  
this moment

Give me Your wisdom in this  
moment

God, You are my God; I seek after  
You

Make my life a prayer for You

Show me Your heart

I give You this burden

Lift my eyes to see You, Jesus

Father, I need You right now

Take this sin from my heart

Yahweh, show me Your glory

Come near, Lord Jesus

Help me to do what pleases You  
today

Come, bring salvation to the  
nations

Come to my neighborhood/  
family/work

Forgive my wondering thoughts

Remind me of Your love in this  
moment

Show me how deep and long and  
wide and tall Your love is

# Unity in Prayer

week 4

## SMALL GROUP STUDY

### Kicking It Off:

- When did you feel most connected to Jesus this week?
- What have you sensed God teaching you lately?

### Big Idea:

Unified prayer in the body of Christ is powerful prayer. It is chain-breaking, earth-shaking, miraculous prayer.

### Key Scriptures:

John 17:20-23

*My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

Ephesians 4:1-6

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*



## Discussion:

1. Read John 17:20-23. What do you think it means to be brought to complete unity?
2. Oneness is sameness in purpose, not sameness in persons. How does this encourage you to use the giftings God has given you to pursue the unified purpose of sharing about Jesus and praying for the Kingdom of God?
3. We see that Jesus prays that diverse people will be united in purpose in John 17:20-23. Knowing that Jesus prays for unity, how does this shift your perspective on the idea of unity and oneness?
4. Read Ephesians 4:1-6. We are urged to live a life like Jesus and pray as He prayed. What does this look like or what can it look like in your life?

## Group Challenge:

Take some time to walk through the Lectio Divina prayer guide. Once your group is done, come back together to share about what you learned, what was challenging, what you enjoyed, etc.

## Memory Verse:



Rejoice always,  
pray continually,  
give thanks in all  
circumstances; for  
this is God's will for  
you in Christ Jesus.

...

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

*Lectio Divina* →

An ancient church practice meant to engage our minds, hearts, and God-given imaginations with Scripture.

### How to Pray in Lectio Divina

Henri Nouwen writes, "We have to listen in a very personal and intimate way to the word of God as it comes to us through the scriptures, letting the word descend from our minds into our hearts." Lectio Divina is one method for doing this.



### Three Questions in Lectio Divina

#### 1. One Word

What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you? In silence, meditate on that.

#### 2. Feelings

What do you feel? What specific situation in your life today relates? Write down a prayer or pray quietly.

#### 3. Invitation

What is God's personal invitation to you from the Scripture? You can write down what the Lord may be saying to you or a prayer of thanks. Or simply rest quietly in the Spirit's presence.

Using one of the scriptures listed below, stay in quiet prayer using the above three questions for a few minutes.

### The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13

### The Beatitudes, Matthew 5:1-12

### The Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-19

# How to Hear from God

week 5

## SMALL GROUP STUDY

### Kicking It Off:

- Have you ever memorized a Bible verse? If so, has it ever come to mind in your prayers?

### Big Idea:

Knowing God is key to knowing what's best. Prayer is talking to God, listening to Him, and getting to know Him better.

### Key Scriptures:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

John 10:27

*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*

### Discussion:

1. The Bible. Are you currently reading your Bible? If not, what are some steps you can take to start? If so, how have you heard from God through your reading? This can be recent or a past experience.
2. The Holy Spirit. Share about a time when you have felt the Spirit guiding you or convicting you. How do you recognize the Holy Spirit? How does knowing that you have the Holy Spirit living within you impact your view of and relationship with God?
3. Godly others. Sometimes, God uses other people to speak to us. They share wisdom, encourage us, and help us see where



we are falling short. How has God used other people in your life to speak to you?

4. Authority. God sometimes uses people in a position of authority to guide us, such as parents, pastors, or even the government. Share about how God has used authority at some point in your life to speak to you and guide you.

### Group Challenge:

Fasting is going without food for a set amount of time to awaken our body and soul to our deep hunger and need for God. Discuss these questions as a group and then choose a day to fast this week. Let your group know when you will be fasting so they can also be praying for you.

1. What is an area of your life where you are praying for discernment, seeking to know the will of God for your life direction?
2. What's an area in your current life where you are praying for a breakthrough?

### Memory Verse:



Rejoice always,  
pray continually,  
give thanks in all  
circumstances; for  
this is God's will for  
you in Christ Jesus.



1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

# Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
  - Take time to prepare.
  - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
  - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
  - What is the purpose of our group?
  - What is the vision for our group?
  - What are your expectations?
  - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
  - What are some things we value as a group?
  - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?

Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
  - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
  - Encouraging and challenging one another
  - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?



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