

"Truth about Prayer"

Zoe Center

INTRODUCTION TO LESSON

Life Group Lesson Objective: To understand what God's word says about prayer.

Life Group Leader preparation:

Prayer is the way of communicating with our heavenly Father.

Jesus taught on Prayer in Luke chapter 11:1-13

1. Pray the will of God – Pray, according to His word
2. Pray persistently – Stand your ground, don't give up
3. Expect God to give you what you ask – according to His will

One of the first things we should learn about prayer is to PRAY ALWAYS.

Jesus said "men should always pray and not faint" – Luke 18:1

God's power is released in our lives WHEN we Pray. Prayer gives God the opportunity to get involved in our life.

WEEK #1 – God expects us to Pray

1. Jesus led by example.

When performing miracles we see Jesus was always sending alone time praying to the Father. We can also do great miracles when we are in continuous communication with our Heavenly Father in prayer.

- Mark 1:32-35 says *32 That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. 35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.*

Before selecting the 12 apostles, Jesus was in prayer all night. Prayer is the key to making wise decisions that impact our lives.

- Luke 6:12 says *12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. 13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles*

As Jesus was about to go the cross to die for our sins, he took time to pray to the Father. The scripture says Jesus was “sorrowful and troubled” about what he was going to face. He even asked the Father three times, if there was any other way to save mankind. God Father never replied, Jesus realizing his fate says “Not my will, but you will be done”

- Matthew 26:35-39 says *36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” 37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” 39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”* ESV

We see from these examples that Jesus was a man of prayer. We knew that we would also need to stay in prayer to deal with the issues of life. Prayer is our greatest weapon against the enemy and our greater source of strength when facing challenges.

2. Pray According to the Word

1. Realize the importance of the Word of God in prayer. We need to spend time daily in God’s Word to know His will, purpose, and plans for our lives.
 - “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” – John 15:7 KJV
2. God's Word is His will. If the Scripture doesn't promise you the things you are desiring, you shouldn't pray for those things. **1 John 5:14-15** says, *“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”*
3. What is God’s will?
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, *“16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”* NKJV
 - Romans 12:2 says, *2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* ESV
 - Matthew 6:33 says, *“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* ESV

Discussion question: Has anyone ever asked God for something, but he did not answer the way you wanted but later you realized that your request was not God’s perfect will for your situation?

Week #2 – Power of Steadfast in Prayer – Don't Give up!

1. Prayer often required persistence and patience especially when times are difficult.

God, our loving Heavenly Father, wants us to communicate with Him through prayer. He always listens to us when we pray. Daily prayer can bless you, your family, and those you pray for. It can also invite more peace into your life, help you learn more about God's plan for you, and more.

Luke 18:1-6 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'" NKJV

Jesus said this woman was rewarded for her persistent prayer. Sometimes the answers do not come immediately, we may need to continue to pray and believe God to receive our breakthrough.

2. It can be hard to pray when our minds are distracted, Paul says that in times of stress, take our cares to our Father.

Philippians 4:6-7 says 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. NIV

Unfortunately, many of us see prayer as a last resort. Instead, we should see prayer as our first response to any situation. This allows God's peace and the Holy Spirit to help guide us through a challenge.

3. Prayer requires faith and belief

James reminds us that we must have faith, meaning we have an expectation that God will answer our prayer.

James 1:5-8 says 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. NIV

This verse is specifically referring to asking for wisdom, however the principle about doubting can also be applied to all prayers. God expects us to trust Him and believe that He is our source.

Discussion Question: Has anyone had a situation where we were believing God for someone and it took longer than you expected for God to answer that prayer, but when he did, it was the perfect time?

Week #3 – Hindances to Prayer

According to the scripture, there can be reasons why our prayers are not being answered.

1. We cannot harbor unforgiveness in our hearts and expect God to answer our prayers.

Mark 11:24-26 – Jesus said:

25 “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” NKJV

It is important that we do not hold grudges and bitterness against others because it can cause our prayers to not be answered.

2. To the Men – We must treat our wives with honor and respect or our prayers may be hindered.

1 Peter 3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Disrespecting your spouse can be a reason our prayers are not answered.

3. Wrong motives can hinder answered prayer. When our motives are not right in prayer, our prayers have no power.

James 4:3, NIV: *When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.* NIV

4. Un-repentant sin - Psalms 66:18 says *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear”*. NKJV Our prayers will not be heard if we are holding **unrepentantly** to some sin. This does not include a believer struggling with a recurring sin who regularly and humbly repents, but this is anyone who willfully harbors sin and refuses to repent.

God is not mocked. God knows our heart. He knows when you are praying for something just to satisfy a personal pleasure or if we are holding on the sinful desire or bitterness against someone.

Discussion question: Have you ever prayed for something that you knew was just for your own pleasure or while you were holding bitterness against someone or had unconfessed sin in your heart?

Week #4 – Power of Agreement in Prayer and Fasting

1. There is spiritual unity and strength when we pray together

Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, *And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*” ESV

Matthew 18:20 says *20 For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.*” NIV

Acts 2:42 *And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

The scripture encourages us to come together in prayer on a regular basis.

2. About Prayer and Fasting

Matthew 17:14-20 Jesus says:

¹⁴ *And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ¹⁵ “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is ^[a]an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶ So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.”*

¹⁷ *Then Jesus answered and said, “O ^[b]faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.” ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.*

¹⁹ *Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?”*

²⁰ *So Jesus said to them, “Because of your ^[c]unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. ^{**21} However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. NKJV*

To be clear, Jesus said their **lack of faith** was the main issue for the disciples' failure to cast the demon out (Matthew 17:17). He did not say their primary issue was a lack of prayer and fasting. The true error—the foundation of their failure—was they did not sufficiently trust the power of God to work through them.

That said, fasting is not wrong and should be encouraged as a way to deny your physical body the desires and pleasures of your flesh to focus on building up the spiritual body by replacing the physical appetite with the Word of God and prayer. Denying our flesh should be part of every believer’s daily life as we die to self and live for Christ.

Paul said it this way in Romans 8:13 NIV

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

Galatians 2:20 says *“I have been crucified with Christ: and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” NIV*

****It should be noted that verse Matthew 17:21 does not appear in most modern bible translations as the phrase does not appear in the most reliable ancient manuscripts.**

Conclusion

- It is important to find a prayer partner or two to get into agreement about something you are believing God for. ***See Challenge Below***
- Must be in agreement – Be sure your prayer is based promises in the Word of God so that you can agree with God in your prayer.
- Come to God in faith, believing and trusting he will answer your prayer. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Hebrews 11:16 says *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him"*.
- Stay consistent and diligent in your prayer life. Sometimes it may take longer that we expect to hear from God. Romans 12:12 Amplified Bible says *12 constantly rejoicing in hope [because of our confidence in Christ], steadfast and patient in distress, devoted to prayer [continually seeking wisdom, guidance, and strength] (AMP)*

Challenge for Everyone this week: If you have not done so, ask someone you trust to be your Prayer Partner. It could be your spouse, family member, Christian co-worker, or a brother or sister in Christ. Commit to a regular set day and time to pray with that person. If you cannot think of anyone, pray sincerely to God to reveal that person to you. God is probably working on them as well about this.