



# PRAYER

christian life today  
a bible study series

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# PRAYER

**Steven Borst**

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# Contents

Introduction		3
Session One:	What Is Prayer?	4
Session Two:	What Is an Acceptable Prayer?	6
Session Three:	What Attitude Should I Have in Prayer?	8
Session Four:	Will God Answer Me?	10
Session Five:	When and Where Should I Pray?	12
Session Six:	Where Can I Find Help in My Prayer Life?	14
Session Seven:	For What Should I Pray? God's Glory!	16
Session Eight:	For What Should I Pray? God's Goodness!	18
Session Nine:	For What Should I Pray? God's Grace!	20
Session Ten:	For What Should I Pray? God's Guardianship!	22
Session Eleven:	What Does It Mean to Intercede in Prayer?	24
Session Twelve:	What Will My Prayers of Praise Look Like?	26

## Leaders Guide

Session One:	What Is Prayer?	28
Session Two:	What Is an Acceptable Prayer?	29
Session Three:	What Attitude Should I Have in Prayer?	30
Session Four:	Will God Answer Me?	31
Session Five:	When and Where Should I Pray?	32
Session Six:	Where Can I Find Help in My Prayer Life?	33
Session Seven:	For What Should I Pray? God's Glory!	34
Session Eight:	For What Should I Pray? God's Goodness!	35
Session Nine:	For What Should I Pray? God's Grace!	36
Session Ten:	For What Should I Pray? God's Guardianship!	38
Session Eleven:	What Does It Mean to Intercede in Prayer?	39
Session Twelve:	What Will My Prayers of Praise Look Like?	40



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## Introduction

# Christian Life Today

The Christian Life Today Bible study series explores contemporary adult issues. Each study in this series will include 12 sessions that will address topics relating to the study's theme. This series will give Christians the opportunity to receive information about key concerns and issues, seek insights from God's Word, and discuss with other Christians how to apply the truth found in Scripture to their lives.

The Christian Life Today Bible study series uses a simple, user-friendly format consisting of four major components: Focus, Inform, Connect, and Vision.

- **Focus** introduces the participants to the concepts that will be explored during the session.
- **Inform** guides participants into Scripture to learn what God says about issues.
- **Connect** provides activities and questions to help participants apply the truth found in Scripture to their lives..
- **Vision** suggests activities for additional growth during the coming week.

The series can be used with large Bible study groups, in small groups, and by individuals as they seek to enrich their devotional life.

The accompanying Leaders Guide provides a suggested format for study and answers to questions.

May God strengthen you in the faith as you study His Word using the Christian Life Today Bible study series.

## Session One

# What Is Prayer?

### Focus

What is prayer? It's a simple enough question and a natural place to start our 12-week journey. Perhaps just as good a question is "What isn't prayer?" This, too, we will investigate in the sessions ahead. Prayer, quite simply, is speaking to God what is in our hearts. Prayer is **not** a means through which God speaks to us; **God speaks to us through His Word**. In prayer, then, we have the privilege of striking up a conversation with our Creator. He speaks to us through His Word, and we respond to Him through prayer.

- a. Rate yourself on the following scale and explain why you rated yourself that way.

---

*"I'm a person of few words."*

*"I love a good conversation."*

- b. How easy is it for you to talk to a stranger? An acquaintance?  
A member of your family? A good friend?

### Inform

1. Read Psalm 19:14.
  - a. What two forms do prayers seem to take?
  
  
  - b. Which form do you find yourself using most often?
  
  
  - c. What seems to be the psalmist's concern regarding his prayer?  
Do you share his concern?
  
2. Read Matthew 7:7–8.
  - a. How important is prayer to Jesus?

- b. According to verse 8, what does God earnestly desire to do for us through prayer?
  
- c. What result stated in verse 8 specifically encourages you? Why?

### **Connect**

There is a reason that God goes out of His way to strongly encourage us to have a vital prayer life: our own sinful nature or outside forces often inhibit us from praying. Read about a particular man who faced such opposition in Daniel 6:6–10, and then connect his story with yours by answering the following:

- a. What barrier(s) prevent you from fully enjoying lively conversations with God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. What can Daniel teach us about the grace that God bestows on those who speak to Him in faith?

### **Vision**

Imagine for a moment being able to storm into the U.S. president’s office at any time to share with him what’s on your mind. This, of course, is ludicrous because very few people have that kind of access to the most powerful man in the world. Compare this privilege with being able to talk to the Creator of the world, God your Heavenly Father. Jesus Christ has opened God’s “office doors” to us through the cross. All of our barriers—sin, the inability to pray, and any other hesitancy to come into the Almighty’s presence—were broken down by Jesus through His death on the cross. We are free to enter into conversation with Him at any time and as often as we like!

- a. Speaking to God might be uncomfortable at first (sort of like speaking to a new acquaintance), but be assured that God is not uncomfortable being with you. Begin to pray on a regular basis, and you will find your conversation with Him to become more natural.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Read Ephesians 6:18. Write it down on an index card and place it in your Bible as a reminder of God’s desire for you to come to Him in prayer.

## Session Two

# What Is an Acceptable Prayer?

### Focus

Think of a time when you had to present a formal request or project to someone. Perhaps it was that large term paper you pulled an “all-nighter” for in school. Maybe it was an important proposal for work that affected your job or division. Now consider these questions:

- a. What criteria did you have to meet in order for the project to be acceptable?
  
- b. What was the result of your project? Did it meet the requirements? What sort of result did it produce?

### Inform

If you think about it, millions of people pray every day. They make requests and present proposals to God. The Bible teaches us, however, what makes these prayers acceptable to God.

1. Read John 14:5–14.
  - a. It sometimes helps to “drop a name” when we enter into a conversation with others. In whose name are we to pray?
  
  - b. What does Jesus assert in verse 6? What would we say of the prayers of those who don’t know “the Way”?
  
2. Read James 5:13–16.
  - a. Prayers that God finds acceptable are not only prayed in His name, but contain other elements. What does James tell us we need when we pray?
  
  - b. Specifically in what circumstances does James tell us we can trust God?

3. Read 1 Kings 18:16–45.
  - a. Make a list of requirements that the prophets of Baal thought they needed for their prayers to be acceptable.
  
  - b. How is Elijah’s prayer different? How did he show his great faith in God?

### **Connect**

In the section above, did you notice what was *not* included in making a prayer acceptable to God? Although we often pray with great emotion, fervor doesn’t really make a prayer more or less acceptable to God. Neither is the eloquence with which we pray a factor that makes our prayers sufficient. While the content of our prayers is important and will affect how God answers us, even this is not dependent on whether or not God will hear our prayer. All that God requires of us is that we call upon His name (and no other!) and through faith trust in Him as our God and Savior.

- a. How will this knowledge encourage you in your prayer life?
  
- b. One man who made a request of Jesus was asked by our Lord if he had faith in God. He responded, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.” In what circumstances do you utter that same prayer?

### **Vision**

In your Baptism, you were adopted as a child of the true and triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You were baptized into His very name, and through faith in Christ you received all that Jesus accomplished for you on the cross. Call upon His wonderful name! He is not just some far—off Lord, but one who wants you to call Him “Father.” Jesus says that we are not only His friends, but His brothers and sisters. The Spirit promises to bring you comfort.

- a. When you doubt and lack faith, return once again to the Scriptures, where God speaks to you. From procuring your salvation to providing you with every earthly need, He will show you that He is trustworthy and He will strengthen your faith.
  
- b. Look up Psalm 19:14 from the previous session. Commit it to memory and begin your prayers this week by reciting it.



## Session Three

# What Attitude Should I Have in Prayer?

### Focus

Dr. James Dobson wrote one of the classic books on raising children who constantly challenge their parents' authority. He entitled it *The Strong-Willed Child*. In his book he writes, "Some children . . . seem to be looking for a fight upon exit from the womb. Such a child comes into the world smoking a cigar and yelling about the temperature in the delivery room and the incompetence of the nursing staff. He expects meals to be served the instant they are ordered, and he demands every moment of his mother's time."

This also describes us at times, doesn't it? There are times when we get locked into a battle of wills with others, and although we would argue that we do so as a matter of conviction, quite often our stubborn wills are driven by our pride.

- a. Describe an occasion from your childhood during which you exercised a strong will.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. How easy or difficult is it for you to "give in" to others?

### Inform

1. Read 1 John 5:14–15.
  - a. Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy will be done." What further insight does this text give regarding God's will?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Romans 12:2 tells us that God's will is "good, pleasing, and perfect." How does this give us the "confidence" that John encourages us to have? Does it make it any easier to "give in" to God's will?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Read Hebrews 10:19–23.
  - a. Describe the attitude of prayer given in this text.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What two things has Jesus Christ done for us so that we might draw nearer to God in all sincerity (see verses 19–21)?

## Connect

God's teachings regarding our attitude in prayer can seem contradictory on the surface. On the one hand, He teaches us to humble ourselves and submit to His will; on the other hand, He encourages us to have great boldness. Yet, as we begin to mature in our prayer life, we see that these two do not stand in conflict with one another. Ultimately, we find our confidence in knowing that God knows the desires of our hearts and will answer us in the very best possible way according to His will. We are encouraged by the promise that "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him" (Isaiah 64:4).

As an example of prayer that exhibits "humble confidence" before the Lord, read Genesis 18:20–33.

- a. How was Abraham seeking to learn God's will, even as he shared his own concerns?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Did God become angry with Abraham's persistence?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. Do you fear that you will annoy God by unflaggingly petitioning Him according to His will? Is it fear or inhibition that can cause you to recite somewhat anemic prayers?

## Vision

When Jesus was confronted with bearing the punishment for our sin, He desired for His own sake to be relieved of such a trial. In the Garden of Gethsemane, however, He prayed, "Thy will, not Mine, be done." It was God's good and gracious will that you be saved from your sin through Christ's atoning blood and adopted into His family. Luther writes that "God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear Father."

- a. What issue(s) in your life do you particularly need to submit to God's will?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. What desire or need in your life do you particularly need to address more boldly before the Lord?

## Session Four

# Will God Answer Me?

### Focus

Our lives today depend on instant access. To gain information, we can quickly log on to any given Web site at any given time of the day or night and find the answers to most of our questions. We can correspond with others via e-mail and get a reply within minutes. On those occasions when we are forced to use the telephone to speak with a customer service representative (during normal business hours, of course) or, even worse, to communicate through mail service, the response time can seem excruciatingly long. At times we might wonder if we will ever receive an answer at all.

How dependent are you on immediate responses? Check the item that best describes your tolerance in waiting for answers.

- \_\_\_\_\_ I have the patience of a saint.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I tend to wait for the phone to ring.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The longer I need to wait, the more likely I will lose interest.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have the impatience of a child waiting to open presents on Christmas.

### Inform

1. Read Psalm 91:1–2, 14–15.
  - a. God's presence is described as a shelter, shadow, refuge, and fortress. Which image do you relate to the most? Why?
  
  - b. In verse 15, what four things does God promise to those who love Him?
  
2. Read Matthew 7:9–12.
  - a. What comparison does Jesus make?
  
  
  - b. At first, verse 12 seems out of context with the prior verses on prayer. As

you consider how God answers our requests, however, what does Jesus seem to teach us regarding those who make requests of us?

3. Read 2 Corinthians 12:8–9.
  - a. We don't know exactly what Paul's request of God was, but we do know what God's answer was. What was it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What reason did God give for not granting Paul's request?

### Connect

If you think about it, prayer is similar to e-mail in that our requests are received instantaneously by God. Our requests don't get misrouted, misfiled, or lost in a stack of "to-do" lists on God's desk. Quite the contrary, God says, "While they are still speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). This, of course, brings us great comfort. What can be frustrating, however, is that God doesn't always answer us as quickly. Furthermore, God does not treat us as a consumer, giving us whatever we want, but rather as a dependent child, giving us what He deems best.

Abraham and Sarah could definitely identify with our frustration in waiting on God to answer. They had prayed for a child all their lives. Finally, when Abraham was 75, God promised him an heir but didn't make good on that promise until Abraham was 100. Yet there was wisdom in God's method. Read Hebrews 11:11–12 and 17–19 to find out what God produced in Abraham.

- a. For what request have you waited a long time for God to answer? How does comparing your circumstances to Abraham's story give you fresh insight into your situation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Describe a time when you, like St. Paul, received a "No" answer from God. How did it enable you to become more reliant on God's grace?

### Vision

St. Peter tells us that "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer" (1 Peter 3:12). As you grow in faith to trust that God will indeed reply to all your prayers, begin also to grow more attentive to God's actual answers! Start to write down your prayers in a notebook, on your computer, or in a prayer journal available from a Christian bookstore. As God answers your prayers, note those as well. Over time, you will see God's constant action in your life and be reminded, no matter how He answers you, to thank Him for it.

## Session Five

# When and Where Should I Pray?

### Focus

It has happened to all of us. Perhaps it took place standing in a circle, holding hands with other Christians. Perhaps it occurred in a public place like a restaurant. Maybe it occurred on an occasion when non-Christian acquaintances sat at our dinner table. All of us have experienced a time when we weren't quite sure where or when to pray. Identify one such occasion in your life, and then answer the following questions.

- a. Why was your situation so awkward?
  
- b. What did you do?
  
- c. In retrospect, did you make the correct decision?

### Inform

To gain a better sense of when and where to pray, we will examine Jesus' practice and teaching on the subject.

1. Read Mark 1:35; Mark 6:46–47; and Luke 6:12.
  - a. Based upon these passages, what seemed to be Jesus' pattern for prayer?
  
  - b. Prior to the most important earthly day of His life, namely, Good Friday, Jesus didn't get any sleep but instead spent the whole night praying. What insight does this give us regarding prayer as a vital preparation for our most important days?
  
2. Read Matthew 6:5–6 and John 11:38–44.
  - a. What reason does Jesus give for praying in secret?

b. What reason does Jesus give for praying publicly to the Father?

### **Connect**

The Lord teaches us that prayer is a part of our everyday public and private lives. In the Old Testament, God's people had the practice of praying seven times a day (Psalm 119:164), and the New Testament church seemed to carry on that tradition. St. Paul goes even further in his instructions to the church at Thessalonica. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18, and then consider the following:

- a. How do you explain Paul's words? Can we really "pray continually"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Have you set a schedule or daily routine for prayer? How closely do you follow it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. Paul exhorts us to pray not only when we are in trouble, but at all times to give thanks to God. How would you describe your thankfulness?

### **Vision**

Through daily and regular prayer, we are called to constant faith. With every breath we take, our very being is to respond to God's uninterrupted grace in our lives and for our salvation. Also, a life of prayer gives public witness to our certain hope of Jesus' triumph over the grave.

Begin this week to nurture the habit of regular prayer, both in your private and public life. You probably won't want to begin by trying to pray seven times per day. Be realistic as you start out. You will certainly want to set aside time every morning and evening for undisturbed prayer. Saying prayers of thanksgiving before every meal is also a realistic starting point. As the Holy Spirit strengthens your discipline, you will begin to mirror the prayer life of our Lord, who "often withdrew to lonely places and prayed" (Luke 5:16).

## Session Six

# Where Can I Find Help in My Prayer Life?

### Focus

As I type these words into my Toshiba laptop, I am riding north on a train from southern Germany to Wiesbaden—a four-hour journey. Although I speak the language well, it has been several years since I have been here, and at times I am at a loss to truly express what I want to say in a foreign language. Fortunately for me, I am spending part of the time with relatives who happen to speak English very well. At my most frustrating times, they are able to intercede on my behalf to say precisely what I am trying to communicate.

Share a time when you were at a loss for words. This incident needn't have occurred in another country. Perhaps it came at a moment when you were unable to put into exact words what you were feeling. As you examine what transpired, consider the following:

- a. What feeling best described your state of mind at the time?  
\_\_\_\_\_ frustrated \_\_\_\_\_ helpless \_\_\_\_\_ dazed \_\_\_\_\_ ambivalent
  
- b. Was there anyone who could intercede by saying exactly what you wanted to say?

### Inform

1. Read Romans 8:1–8.
  - a. What did Jesus Christ do for us when we were still rendered powerless by the Law?
  
  - b. How does the Holy Spirit “change our minds”? How does He move us from seeking our own will to seek God’s will in prayer?
  
2. Read Romans 8:12–17.
  - a. When we doubt God’s love or nearness to us, to what does the Holy Spirit testify (verse 16)?

b. What does the Holy Spirit teach us to say in our prayers?

3. Read Romans 8:26–27.

a. How does the Spirit intercede for us when we don't know what to pray?

b. How does the Spirit guide the content of our prayers?

### Connect

This section, “Connect,” is aptly named. What better question can we ask than “How can we connect with the Holy Spirit in order to spiritually strengthen our prayer lives?” St. Peter harkens us back to our Baptism in Acts 2:38 when he says, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” It was at our Baptism that God deposited His Spirit into our hearts and made us a new creation.

a. For what particular prayer do you need the “groanings” of the Holy Spirit to help you?

b. How can daily remembering God's covenant with you at your Baptism, where He gifted you with the Holy Spirit, grant you confidence in your prayers?

### Vision

In John 16, Jesus promises us that He will send us the Holy Spirit to “guide us into all truth” (verse 13). This week, begin to notice how the Holy Spirit aids our faith from beginning to end: He speaks to us through God's Word and then helps us speak to God in prayer. Pray for the Holy Spirit to continue to intercede on your behalf, and thank Him for it!



## Session Seven

# For What Should I Pray? God's Glory!

### Focus

In the next three sessions, we will examine more closely the content of our prayers. When the disciples considered the same topic, they came to Jesus and asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Jesus granted their request by teaching them the Lord's Prayer, and it is this prayer that will serve as a model to teach us as well.

What becomes immediately apparent is that Jesus teaches us to begin our prayers not for ourselves, nor for others, but, surprisingly enough, for God. The first part of the Lord's Prayer centers around God, and in it we pray for His name, His kingdom, and His will. Think back over your prayer life this past week and then consider the following:

- a. How often did you pray the Lord's Prayer verbatim? How well did you meditate on its content?
  
- b. In the prayers that you constructed, what percentage centered on your needs? Others' needs? God's glory?

### Inform

1. Read Exodus 20:7 and Philippians 2:5–11.
  - a. What does God command regarding His name?
  
  - b. Why is Jesus' name above every other name?
  
2. Read Mark 1:14–18.
  - a. What is the connection between faith and God's kingdom?
  
  - b. How would you describe Simon and Andrew's response to their King's command?

3. Read Philippians 3:12–21.
  - a. Where is our citizenship?

- b. How does this affect our thoughts?

### **Connect**

In the first part of the Lord’s Prayer, we come to better understand exactly what God’s will is. First, God wills that we keep His name holy. This means that we should not misuse His name, but rather frequently call upon it in praise and prayer. We also live holy lives so that those around us see how our good deeds honor our Father in heaven. Second, God wills that His kingdom would come into the hearts of all people and, ultimately, at the end time, that Jesus would come and usher us home. This means that we pray for and support the spreading of the Gospel and that we witness our faith to those around us. It means further that we need to ready ourselves for Jesus’ Second Coming.

- a. What is the most difficult part for you in following God’s will?

- b. What comforts you the most in knowing that God’s will will be done on earth as it is in heaven?

### **Vision**

Psalm 103:1 encourages us to “Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name.” This week, make God’s glory the dominant theme of your prayers. Use the Lord’s Prayer as an outline for your own petitions and learn to begin each prayer by praying about God’s name, kingdom, and will. Jot down below some specific things that you will include in your prayers.

God’s Name:

God’s Kingdom:

God’s Will:



2. Read Matthew 6:25–33.

- a. Notice how Jesus' sermon echoes Psalm 104. What can the birds of the air and the lilies of the field teach us about worrying over the necessities of life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Even as we pray for daily bread, for what loftier petitions does Jesus encourage us to pray?

### **Connect**

God invites us to come to Him with all our needs and desires. No concern of ours is too small for His grace-filled concern over our well-being. Jesus teaches us to pray daily for our bread, not only to remind us from where our blessings come, but also to be thankful for what we have.

Read Luke 17:11–19. Then use the questions to make connections to your life.

- a. Does your prayer life reflect the nine who left or the one who returned?  
Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. At what times of your life are you more mindful of God's goodness to you?  
What could you do to extend that thankfulness to your everyday life?

### **Vision**

God's generosity covers all of our needs, especially our need for forgiveness. Jesus Christ gave up His very life for us so that we might have not just an abundant life on earth but eternal life in heaven. Read 1 John 3:17–18 and then consider how you might reflect God's goodness to those around you. Complete each sentence starter below and then fulfill it during the coming month.

I will share my talents with

I will give my time to

I will make a special donation for

## Session Nine

# For What Should I Pray? God's Grace!

### Focus

Our study in the Lord's Prayer continues with the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." In it Jesus calls us to ask for God's grace and to share it with those around us.

This petition always reminds me of song lyrics that talk about "sorry" being the hardest word to say. From the way Jesus fashioned His prayer, we might add, "*You're forgiven* seems to be pretty hard to say as well!"

How would you describe your conscience? Place an "x" on the spot of the continuum that best describes you:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
Live and let live I feel guilty no matter what I do
- b. Name one factor that inhibits you from saying you're sorry.

### Inform

1. Read Psalm 51:1–12.
  - a. If your Bible includes a subtitle to this psalm, read it. On what occasion did David write this psalm? How would you describe David's attitude in this psalm?
  - b. Even though David committed adultery with Bathsheba (and later had her husband killed), against whom does he say he's sinned?
  - c. What does David know about himself (verse 5)? What does he know about God (verse 7)?
2. Read Psalm 103:8–14.
  - a. How does David describe the forgiveness of God?
  - b. How does verse 13 give further insight into how we address God in the Lord's Prayer?

3. Read Matthew 18:21–22.
  - a. Why do you suppose Peter asked this question of the Lord?
  
  - b. How do you suppose Peter reacted to Jesus' answer? Considering some of those "hard-to-deal-with" people in your life, how do you react to Jesus' answer?

### Connect

Both in His Lord's Prayer and in His teaching, Jesus seems to emphasize the full and free forgiveness that His death on the cross has won. No matter what we have done or where we have been, God promises to cleanse our souls with the red blood of Calvary. Jesus also connects this thought to God's grace (not as a stipulation *for*, but rather as a consequence *of*, God's forgiveness). We readily and richly release others from their sin as God has released us from our sin.

Read the story that Jesus told to explain this point in Matthew 18:23–35. Then connect it to your own circumstances.

- a. The servant owed the king 10,000 talents, the equivalent of millions of dollars. In turn, the servant's companion owed the servant 100 denarii, the equivalent of three months' wages. What does Jesus teach as He compares the forgiveness you have received from His Father to the forgiveness you give to others?
  
- b. A several-million-dollar debt is much more than most of us make in a lifetime, and so it's no wonder we find the servant begging before the king. Consider how you approach the Father as you pray for forgiveness. What is your attitude before Him? How does faith in Christ's work help shape your attitude?
  
- c. How are you convicted by the actions of the ungrateful servant? From whom have you withheld your forgiveness?

### Vision

Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Include a petition of forgiveness in your daily prayers. Come with the humility and confidence that David showed in the psalms. Then, in view of God's grace, determine to whom you need to be more gracious. Make a point to contact that person this week (whether in person, over the phone, or by e-mail) and share with them your kind pardon.

## Session Ten

# For What Should I Pray? God's Guardianship

### Focus

John walks out onto the tennis court in a good mood. His opponent is a man at least 20 years older who doesn't look too formidable. He greets his opponent with a very warm hello (there doesn't seem to be any need to put on his "game face") and begins warming up. "Perfect," John thinks with each stroke he takes. "This guy doesn't have a lot of power—he needs to hail a taxi just to move around the court. I'll be off the court and showered within the hour."

Two-and-a-half hours later, John is drenched with sweat, frustrated, and down 5–2 in the third set. His opponent, whose pinpoint precision has had John running all over the court, is about to serve out the final game. He, not John, will go home the victor. John stands to receive the serve, not caring about how he will return the ball. All he can think about now is losing as painlessly as possible and going home.

- a. Share a time when you underestimated an opponent? What happened?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. How do you face a task that seems insurmountable? Explain the reason for your answer.

- \_\_\_\_\_ I tend to whine and feel a bit sorry for myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I often don't know where to begin, and so I don't.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I face my trials for a short while but then quickly find a graceful way out.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I fight to the bitter end, even when I know I'll fall short.

### Inform

As we look at the last two petitions of the Lord's Prayer, we consider how God provides us His protection. Jesus teaches us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from evil." To find out for what exactly we are asking, read the passages below.

1. Read James 1:12–15.
  - a. What is the source of our temptation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. From what do need to be saved (see verse 15)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Read 1 Corinthians 10:12–13.

- a. When do we need to be careful regarding temptation?
  - b. What comfort does verse 13 give us when we need a shelter from temptation?
3. Read 1 Peter 5:8–11.
- a. From what, other than our sinful natures and the temptations of the world, do we need protection?
  - b. How can we resist the devil?
  - c. How will God ultimately deliver us from evil?

### **Connect**

Ephesians 6 tells us that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (v. 12). To aid us in this struggle, God provides us not only with the fortress of His care, but with daily armor to keep us safe. Read Ephesians 6:10–18 to see how you can daily connect to God’s protection.

- a. Out of all the pieces of spiritual armor described, what piece do you tend to forget to put on daily? Why?
- b. Notice the emphasis of prayer “in the Spirit” in verse 18. How aware are you that your prayer life is part of a greater spiritual battle? Which petitions particularly seem like a continuous battle?

### **Vision**

In the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus encourages us to see that our prayers take place in a spiritual dimension. As you pray, do not be blind to the unseen, greater battle that is taking place in the world. Don’t underestimate the power of the enemy, the devil, who seeks to destroy you. More importantly, don’t underestimate the power of your Lord, who through His death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb delivered us from the evil consequences of our sin and the power of the evil one. Make it your practice to always pray for God’s guardianship as you face temptation and evil.



## Session Eleven

# What Does It Mean to Intercede in Prayer?

### Focus

The Bible speaks of interceding on behalf of others. In the space below, write what you think to "intercede" for someone means. Next, consider a time when you interceded for someone. What were the circumstances? To whom did you go to deal with the problem? What was the result?

To "intercede" means:

The occasion I interceded for someone was:

### Inform

There are many examples of intercessory prayer in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, Moses, Samuel, and David all interceded on behalf of Israel, praying that God would not treat His people according to their sin, but rather according to His mercy. In the New Testament, the best known prayer of intercession is that of Jesus shortly before His arrest and death on the cross. This prayer is often referred to as Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer," because in it Jesus acts as a priest, going before His Father on behalf of His people. It is this prayer that will serve as the basis for our study.

1. Read John 17:6–19.
  - a. For whom does Jesus intercede? How does He emphasize this in verse 9?
  - b. In verses 11–12, what does Jesus say is about to happen? Why is He concerned?
  - c. In Session Two of this study, we looked at how we made our prayers powerful as we prayed in Jesus' name. How does Jesus use His name in verses 11–12?
  - d. For what exactly does Jesus pray in verses 15 and 17?
2. Read John 17:20–26.
  - a. For whom does Jesus intercede in this section of His prayer?
  - b. Jesus desires intimacy with those who believe in Him. How does He express this intimacy in verses 21–23?
  - c. What effect does God-given unity in the Church have on the world? (See verse 23.)

d. What work does Jesus promise to continue to do for us in verse 26?

### Connect

Romans 8:34 tells us that “Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God interceding for us.” By His blood, we are forgiven, and no one can bring any accusation against us! Because Jesus continues to intercede on our behalf, we are empowered to intercede for one another. Read the two passages below from St. Paul’s life and then connect them to your own.

1. Read Ephesians 1:15–19a.

a. Notice how in verses 16–17 Paul states that he prays without ceasing for the Ephesians. For what does he pray?

b. How vigilant are you in earnestly interceding for others in prayer? Circle where you are on the continuum below:

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
(I too often forget to intercede)      (I intercede for others daily)

c. Notice that Paul prays that the Ephesians would have a stronger and more enlightened faith in Christ. For whose faith do you need to intercede in prayer?

2. Read Romans 15:30–33.

a. Paul realizes that he too needs intercessory prayer. How easy or difficult is it for you to ask others to pray for you? Like Paul, do you ask your entire local congregation for prayers, or do you keep your requests limited to those you know intimately?

b. Do you have anyone praying for you now? If you could ask for people to intercede for you regarding one thing, what would it be?

### Vision

James 5:16 makes a very potent promise: “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” Read the context of this verse from James 5:13–16 and then consider how you might integrate intercession in your prayer life.

a. Select three people who you know need prayers for faith and healing, and pray for them each day next week.

b. Tell someone close to you that you desire to pray for them. Ask them for specific things for which you might intercede before God the Father.

c. Ask others to intercede for you. Consider asking your congregation to include you in their Sunday prayers, or confide in someone you respect and trust.

## Session Twelve

# What Will My Prayers of Praise Look Like?

### Focus

It was evening in San Francisco, and even though it was in the middle of the summer, the temperature had dropped quickly. A close friend and I were driving home from an Oakland A's baseball game that we had thoroughly enjoyed. They had played my favorite club from childhood, the Detroit Tigers (I'm a Michigander by birth!). As the cheers of the game faded to the drone of the car engine and the bright lights of the stadium dimmed to headlights on the highway, my thoughts began to return again to the worries of life. The game had proven to be a very brief diversion from some of the stresses I was experiencing at the time.

As we began to drive over the Golden Gate Bridge, we were completely socked in by the deep fog that had rolled in across the bay. It was an eerie feeling, driving on a bridge where you could not see to the side beyond the guardrails. Above, the top of the bridge disappeared into the clouds. It was a curious picture of what my life seemed to be like at that moment: I felt particularly trapped by my present circumstances.

As we drove off the bridge and out of the fog and could once again see, my friend made a request that similarly opened my eyes to the broad landscape of my life. Perhaps it was because he was tired of my complaining, but in his wisdom he said, "Steven, it seems that lately you've been focusing on all your problems. Tell me five things that you are thankful for." That request wakened me from my coma of complaining like no advice had previously. His request dissipated the fog in my heart and mind, and soon I began to realize that I indeed had a lot to be thankful for.

### Inform

God encourages us to be thankful children not only because it is the right thing to do, but because "thanks living" changes our perspective on life. Read the following passages on prayers of thanksgiving.

1. Read Deuteronomy 8:10–18.
  - a. In these verses God reminds His people that He delivered them from exile into the Promised Land. How does the text paint a picture of their lives in the wilderness (verses 15–16)?
  - b. In these same verses, how did God prove to be faithful to His people?
  - c. What imperative does verse 10 give us? What reason do verses 11–14 give for this command?
  - d. In verses 17–18, we are given two differing opinions of earthly blessings. What are they, and why do we need to "remember the Lord your God"?

2. Read Habakkuk 3:1–19.
  - a. Habakkuk was a prophet who lived during a particularly dark time in Israel’s history. In the first two chapters of the book, Habakkuk complains to God that evil acts seem to go unpunished. The Lord in turn tells Habakkuk to trust in Him and that His divine plan will soon be fulfilled. How does verse 2 set the theme of Habakkuk’s entire prayer?
  - b. Verses 3–15 are a litany of adulation for God’s mighty acts. Pick one verse that is most meaningful to you and explain the reason for your choice.
  - c. Look at verses 16–18. How does Habakkuk see his life? How does he respond to these circumstances?
  - d. What is Habakkuk’s statement of faith in verse 19? If this is indeed true, how does this give insight to why we lift up prayers of thanksgiving?

### **Connect**

How can we continue to lift up prayers of praise, even when we face conditions similar to Habakkuk’s? Consider the following questions:

1. Read Luke 18:9–14.
  - a. What wrong kind of thanks does the Pharisee offer? How are we tempted to pray in this way when we begin to compare our lives to others?
  - b. An old trusted outline for prayer is the A-C-T-S model: Adoration, Confession of sins, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. Habakkuk adores God for who He is and what He has done. For what do you particularly adore God?
2. Read Romans 5:9–11.
  - a. How does the Gospel create in us an attitude of gratitude?
  - b. No matter what your current circumstances, you have a bounty of things for which to thank God. Make a list of five of these things.

### **Vision**

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 tells us, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Remember to give thanks for your list of five blessings every day this week. Be deliberate in your adulation for God, always remembering to adore and give thanks every time you pray. Be careful to keep your “list of five” updated, as God persistently reveals to you who He is and how He continually acts in your life.

# Leaders Guide

## Session One

### What Is Prayer?

#### Focus

The two questions are meant for participants to assess how easy or difficult it is for them to speak to other people. Answers will vary.

#### Inform

**1. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Psalm 19:14.**

- a. Prayer takes two forms—speaking with words and praying silently through meditation.
- b. Answers will vary.
- c. The psalmist earnestly desires to give the Lord prayers that please Him.

**2. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 7:7–8.**

- a. Jesus encourages us to earnestly pray to God by citing three methods that we can use to approach God frequently: ask, seek, knock.
- b. God wishes to answer our prayers.
- c. Highlight the imagery that Jesus uses—receiving, finding, opening—and ask participants which image encourages them most.

#### Connect

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Daniel 6:6–10. Discussion may ensue about Daniel's story. Guide participants in connecting Daniel's situation with their own.

- a. Some barriers may be personal, such as timidity or a too-busy schedule. Others may have to do with outside influences, such as the inability to pray at work or school.
- b. Daniel continues to pray to his heavenly Father and obeys God instead of men even though he faces death. God blesses him and keeps him safe.

#### Vision

- a. Encourage participants to write down a time each day during the coming week for prayer. The length of time will vary and that's okay. If your group is particularly close, you might ask if the participants want to enter into a covenant to pray regularly and weekly.
- b. Ask for a volunteer to read Ephesians 6:18. Encourage participants to refer to it during the week.

## Session Two

# What Is an Acceptable Prayer?

### Focus

Encourage participants to share experiences. Then ask them to answer the Focus questions.

- a. Criteria were probably given by a teacher or boss.
- b. Answers may vary. Have participants measure how well they met requirements and how well the project worked.

### Inform

#### **1. Ask for someone to read aloud John 14:5–14.**

- a. We pray in Jesus' name.
- b. No one has access to God except through Jesus. God only hears prayers that are offered through faith in His Son.

#### **2. Ask for someone to read aloud James 5:13–16.**

- a. We pray in faith, trusting that, through Jesus, we who are forgiven sinners have access to a Holy God. We trust as well that God will answer our prayers as He sees fit.
- b. James tells us that we can trust God at all times, whether we are happy or in trouble.

#### **3. Since this is a long text, have several people read aloud 1 Kings 18:16–45.**

- a. The prophets of Baal asked their god to answer them. They danced around their altar. When this didn't work, they shouted louder and cut themselves to show their deep piety. This seemed to be typical of their "frantic prophesying."
- b. Elijah connects his prayer to the covenant that God had made with Israel. Elijah humbles himself as God's servant and asks Him to answer his prayers with power. Elijah is so sure of God that he douses his wood with water.

### Connect

- a. God's people don't have to meet complicated requirements to have their prayers heard.
- b. Because we are sinful people, no one has a perfect faith. All of us struggle with doubt. Encourage participants to come before the Lord in prayer even in those areas where they struggle. Let them know that God desires for them to pray and that He wants to answer their prayers.

### Vision

- a. God speaks to us through the Word, and it is there that He strengthens our faith. Invite participants to come regularly to this Bible study so that the Lord might continue to guide and strengthen them.
- b. Remind the group of Psalm 19:14. Recite it together in your closing prayer.

## Session Three

# What Attitude Should I Have in Prayer?

### Focus

- a. Ask for willing participants to share their experiences.
- b. Answers will vary.

### Inform

#### **1. Ask for someone to read aloud 1 John 5:14–15.**

- a. We pray according to God's will. Sometimes we will know what that is, while at other times we ask for His will to be done not knowing fully what God intends.
- b. God's ways are higher than our ways. From our finite perspective, we might sometimes question how God answers our prayers. We can be confident, however, that God's ways are always better than ours. This gives us confidence to submit our will to His.

#### **2. Have a participant read aloud Hebrews 10:19–23.**

- a. We pray boldly because of Jesus. The text uses such words as "confidence" and "hold unswervingly."
- b. Jesus opened the way to God by shedding His blood on the cross on our behalf. He also sits as the great "High Priest" of the heavenly tabernacle, interceding on our behalf.

### Connect

Have a volunteer read Genesis 18:20–33.

- a. Abraham begins by asking God if He will sweep away "the righteous with the wicked." Since God has revealed that He would not, Abraham bases his further petitions in light of God's revealed will.
- b. God was patient with Abraham and indeed answered his prayers.
- c. If we pray in faith and submit to God's will, we never need to be shy in coming before Him with confidence that He will hear our prayers.

### Vision

Encourage participants to write down the answers to both questions. Have them focus on these issues in their prayer life this week. End your session by praying that God's will be done regarding all of your petitions.

## Session Four

### Will God Answer Me?

#### Focus

Have participants check the appropriate category. Then ask them to give an example of why they checked that statement.

#### Inform

**1. Have a volunteer read aloud Psalm 91:1–2, 14–15.**

- a. Answers will vary. Ask participants to share why they chose their answers.
- b. God promises to answer us, to be present with us in times of trouble, to deliver us out of our trouble, and to bestow honor on us as His children.

**2. Have a volunteer read aloud Matthew 7:9–12.**

- a. Jesus compares God with our earthly parents. If our imperfect parents desire to give their children good things, think of how well our perfect God will take care of us!
- b. Because God has been so gracious to us, we should treat others with the same love and concern.

**3. Have a volunteer read 2 Corinthians 12:8–9.**

- a. God told Paul “No” in response to his prayers.
- b. God wanted to use Paul’s burden for a greater purpose. He would give Paul His grace and exhibit His power through Paul’s weakness. This would serve a greater good.

#### Connect

Have a volunteer read aloud Hebrews 11:11–12 and 17–19.

- a. Participants may or may not want to share their particular petition. Ask them, however, to compare their plight with Abraham's. Abraham oftentimes demonstrated weakness in waiting on the Lord, but ultimately God used the waiting to strengthen his faith. God works to strengthen our faith when He asks us to wait on Him.
- b. Again, depending on the petition, participants might not want to describe the particular request. Ask them to share how they felt when God said “No” but continued to bless them. If someone can’t see God’s grace in their situation, encourage them to pray that in faith they might trust that God is present as their “refuge,” even when they don’t perceive Him to be.

#### Vision

In your closing prayers, ask participants to thank the Lord for one particular prayer He has answered for them. Encourage them to continue to watch for God’s answers this next week.



## Session Five

# When and Where Should I Pray?

### Focus

Ask those who are comfortable to share their answers.

### Inform

**1. Select three people to read aloud Mark 1:35; Mark 6:46–47; and Luke 6:12.**

- a. Jesus often retreated in solitude both early in the morning and late at night to pray.
- b. Through prayer we prepare! We can ask God for strength. We can share with Him our desires and pray for His will. Too often prayer is looked at as a last resort instead of a matter of first importance.

**2. Ask two volunteers to read aloud Matthew 6:5–6 and John 11:38–44.**

- a. Jesus reminds us that we are to direct our prayers to God and that they should not be spoken to impress others. When we pray in solitude, we are freed from outside distractions.
- b. Jesus prayed out loud as a testimony to those around Him of the Father's love. Public prayer is appropriate when it is intended to glorify God, not us.

### Connect

Have a volunteer read aloud 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18.

- a. Paul intends that God's saints pray regularly and consistently. While He does not mean that we are to be constantly on our knees in prayer, we need to live our lives in response to God's goodness to us. All thoughts, actions, and desires are offered to God as sacrifices of praise.
- b. Answers will vary. Different people will pray at various frequencies, depending on their maturity in faith. Encourage your group to set up a personal schedule for prayer and keep it!
- c. Emphasize the importance of giving thanks in each and every prayer. Session Twelve of this study deals with this topic more extensively.

### Vision

Read aloud the vision section. Urge participants to set personal goals for prayer in this coming week.

## **Session Six**

# **Where Can I Find Help in My Prayer Life?**

### **Focus**

Have volunteers share times when they were at a loss for words and how they reacted. Answers will vary.

### **Inform**

**1. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Romans 8:1–6.**

- a. Jesus Christ, true God, took on our flesh and became truly human. Christ fulfilled the Law perfectly and then offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins.
- b. When we become a new creation in Christ, the Holy Spirit resides in our hearts and works to conform our will to God's.

**2. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Romans 8:12–17.**

- a. The Holy Spirit strengthens our faith, assuring us that we are indeed God's children.
- b. As we are strengthened in faith, the Holy Spirit creates an intimacy between us and God so strong that we are invited to call God "Abba." An English equivalent to this Aramaic word is "Daddy."

**3. Have a volunteer read aloud Romans 8:26–27.**

- a. As finite human beings, we are incapable of truly knowing or expressing all our desires and needs. The Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf to express our prayers perfectly before the Father.
- b. The Spirit intercedes for us according to God's will.

### **Connect**

- a. Answers will vary. If we don't know quite what to pray, we will also be unable to communicate that need to one another.
- b. At our Baptism, God claimed us as His own children in Jesus Christ and granted us His Holy Spirit. No matter how eloquent we are (or aren't!), the Spirit, who resides in us, is able to express our prayers perfectly before the Father. This grace gives us great boldness!

### **Vision**

The Holy Spirit teaches us who Jesus Christ is, what He has done for us, and what He has taught. He also aids us in our prayers spoken in faith through Christ's name. Center prayer goals this week around being mindful of the Spirit's activity and thankful for it!

## Session Seven

# For What Should I Pray? God's Glory!

### Focus

- a. Answers will vary.
- b. Have participants estimate the percentage of their prayers that center on their needs, others' needs, and God's glory.

### Inform

- 1. Ask for two volunteers to read aloud Exodus 20:7 and Philippians 2:5–11.**
  - a. God's name is holy. God does not want us to use His name to make empty or unimportant promises or in cursing.
  - b. Jesus' name is above every other name because He is the Savior of the world. He humbled Himself and died for us on the cross, then rose victoriously from the grave. While only Christians glorify His name now, at His Second Coming all people will acknowledge Him as Lord of all creation.
- 2. Have a volunteer read aloud Mark 1:14–18.**
  - a. Those who enter the kingdom of God have been convicted of their sin, repented of it, and trust in Jesus Christ for forgiveness.
  - b. Simon and Andrew responded immediately to their King's request.
- 3. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Philippians 3:12–21.**
  - a. Our citizenship is in heaven. By God's grace we are members of God's kingdom.
  - b. Those whose minds are on earthly things are bent on destruction and glory in shame. As citizens of heaven, we desire God's will in our lives and that His will would be done for us as it is in heaven.

### Connect

- a. Answers will vary. Because we are sinful beings, we are always fighting against God's holy laws as given to us in the Ten Commandments.
- b. We can be comforted in knowing that although we might not understand fully, God, who is all knowing, does and is in complete control.

### Vision

Consider how to honor God's name and seek His kingdom and will. Encourage participants to write some notes and to include them in their prayers this week. Close your session by praying the Lord's Prayer.

## **Session Eight**

### **For What Should I Pray? God's Goodness!**

#### **Focus**

- a. Answers will vary.
- b. As creations of the Creator, we are completely dependent on Him for salvation and life. We often lose sight of this fact until we experience a trial such as the one experienced by the businessman in the opening story.

#### **Inform**

**1. Divide Psalm 104 so that everyone in your group will read aloud several verses.**

- a. Psalm 104 shows the brilliance of God's creation and how we are blessed by being interconnected with each other. The rain produces vegetation that is used by animals for food and shelter, and the animals in turn are a source of food for people. The sun offers daylight for us to work, while the nocturnal animals work during the night.
- b. We are dependent on God's goodness not only for the basics of life, but for new life in the Spirit.

**2. Have a volunteer read aloud Matthew 6:25–33.**

- a. If God takes such good care of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, will He not take care of us, the crown of His creation?
- b. Jesus calls us back to the first part of the Lord's Prayer—God's kingdom! God promises that as we keep first things first (our relationship with Him), He will provide all that we need for our daily life.

#### **Connect**

Have a volunteer read aloud Luke 17:11–19.

- a. We often forget God's good gifts to us and therefore are guilty of being like the nine.
- b. We are thankful when we are aware of how good God actually is! We become aware of this as we read Scripture. Also, we can keep track of our petitions and how God has answered them.

#### **Vision**

Have a volunteer read aloud 1 John 3:17–18. Goals for the month will vary. Conclude your session by praying the Lord's Prayer.

## Session Nine

# For What Should I Pray? God's Grace!

### Focus

- a. Have participants place a mark on the continuum and share why they answered the way they did.
- b. Answers may vary. Possible responses include pride, not knowing the right words to say, fear of sounding hypocritical, and fear of the consequences associated with guilt.

### Inform

#### 1. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Psalm 51:1–12.

- a. David wrote this psalm to confess his sin of sleeping with Bathsheba and plotting her husband's execution. David's attitude in this psalm is one of contrition and repentance.
- b. David realizes that his sin is not just against Bathsheba and her husband, but first and foremost against God.
- c. Verse 5 is one of the great texts that prove original sin. David knew that all people are conceived and born sinful. David knows further that through faith in the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, God cleanses us of all sin.

#### 2. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Psalm 103:8–14.

- a. David emphasizes that once God forgives sin, it is gone forever. Through Christ, our sin is removed from us as far as the east is from the west.
- b. We are taught to pray "Our Father." God is a compassionate Father who loves us as His very own children.

#### 3. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 18:21–22.

- a. More than likely, Peter wasn't anxious to forgive his brother, but wanted to know at what point he could stop forgiving him! We often approach those who sin against us in a similar way.
- b. Jesus refers to a common Jewish teaching of forgiving a person up to seven times by multiplying it exponentially. He bursts Peter's conception of forgiveness by moving him from the letter of the Law ("I'll only forgive you seven times") to the realm of true grace (forgiveness without strings attached).

### Connect

Ask for volunteers to read the parts of narrator, the first servant, and the second servant from Matthew 18:23–35.

- a. Jesus emphasizes the fact that God's forgiveness for us far outweighs the forgiveness we share with others. He forgives us not only for our actions, but for the very fact that we are by nature sinful and unclean.
- b. Our attitude before God is reverent fear and confidence. We are in awe of God that

He is holy and completely aware that we are not. If God does not deal with us in His grace, we are bound for certain destruction. Yet, at the same time, we can approach God in confidence, knowing that through Jesus, God forgives us!

- c. Answers will vary. Thanks be to God! Jesus forgives even our lack of forgiveness. His love motivates and empowers us to forgive others.

### **Vision**

Make an action plan for your prayers this week, concentrating on forgiveness. Close with the Lord's Prayer.

## Session Ten

# For What Should I Pray? God's Guardianship!

### Focus

Answers to both questions will vary.

### Inform

**1. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud James 1:12–15.**

- a. God does not tempt us. This text tells us that we are tempted by our own sinful flesh and the world.
  
- b. We need to be saved from sin and death.

**2. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Corinthians 10:12–13.**

- a. We need to be careful when we are lulled into a false sense of security. It is then that we are most vulnerable.
  
- b. God promises that we will not be tempted beyond our threshold of resistance. This promise brings us great comfort. God, who is faithful, will always provide means of deliverance from every temptation.

**3. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Peter 5:8–11.**

- a. We need protection from the devil.
  
- b. God calls us to resistance through faith. We trust in God's promises and cling to His Word.
  
- c. God ultimately delivers His children from evil through the eternal life Jesus Christ won for us on the cross. On the day when we pass from this life into heaven, sin, death, and the devil will no longer have any power over us.

### Connect

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud all of Ephesians 6:10–18.

- a. Answers will vary. Our armor is made up of the truth, the righteousness of Christ, witnessing the Gospel, saving faith, certain knowledge of salvation, and the Word of God.
  
- b. Answers will vary.

### Vision

Conclude with the Lord's Prayer.

## Session Eleven

# What Does It Mean to Intercede in Prayer?

### Focus

Webster's defines to "intercede" as "to plead or make a request on behalf of another or others," and "to intervene for the purpose of producing agreement; mediate." Ask participants to think of a time when they interceded for someone.

### Inform

#### 1. Have a volunteer read aloud John 17:6–19.

- a. Jesus prays for His disciples.
- b. Jesus is about to enter into His passion. After His resurrection and ascension, He will leave His disciples in the world. Jesus knows, however, that another Comforter—the Holy Spirit—will come to strengthen their faith.
- c. Jesus' name is holy. Through faith we are His holy children under His divine care.
- d. Jesus doesn't pray that His disciples will be spared trouble, but rather He prays that they might have faith to sustain them through troubles. Followers of Jesus are sent into the world to share God's love. As we go, we are not promised a journey without harm, but rather we are given God's grace to see us through each and every obstacle.

#### 2. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud John 17:20–26.

- a. Jesus prays not just for His disciples, but for all believers who will come to faith through the apostles' message.
- b. The Trinity is three persons, one essence. Jesus prays that just as He and the Father are one, we might experience unity with God and other believers. Jesus, who is in us, is also one with the Father. Jesus makes us one.
- c. Communion with God and one another is meant to be a testimony to the world of God's grace and love.
- d. He promises to continue to reveal the truth of God through the Spirit of grace. This is more than just an intellectual exercise. We are not just told about God's love, but actually loved by God!

### Connect

#### 1. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Ephesians 1:15–19a.

- a. Paul prays that the Ephesians, who are already known for their faith and love, might mature in that faith and love through the Holy Spirit.
- b. Answers will vary.
- c. Answers will vary. Paul teaches us that we need to pray not only for the physical well-being of those around us, but also for their spiritual well being.

#### 2. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Romans 15:30–33.

- a. Answers will vary. It is proper to ask close friends to pray for you as well as your local congregation. Too often we forget or are too shy to use the latter.
- b. Answers will vary.

### Vision

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud James 5:13–16. Answers will vary to the follow-up questions. End your session by interceding for one another.

## Session Twelve



# What Will My Prayers of Praise Look Like?

## Focus

Read aloud the introductory paragraphs.

## Inform

### 1. Have a volunteer read aloud Deuteronomy 8:10–18.

- a. The Israelites wandered in the hot and barren desert for 40 years. They faced the threat of not only being exposed to the elements, but to the beastly inhabitants of the desert.
- b. God gave them manna and quail to eat and provided them with water.
- c. We are told to praise the Lord! He is the One who gives us all good things. The thankless heart forgets the goodness of God.
- d. Some think their earthly wealth is a result of their own ability. Wise persons, however, see that God has given them this ability in the first place and has provided them the opportunity to acquire earthly wealth.

### 2. Have a volunteer read aloud Habakkuk 3:1–19.

- a. Habakkuk approaches God's throne in awe. He knows full well that God is an awesome God, and he asks that the Lord would continue to act according to His gracious will.
- b. Answers will vary.
- c. Habakkuk's life is no rose garden! He knows, however, that to be a child of God is the greatest treasure and therefore praises God for who He is and how He has acted on behalf of His people.
- d. Habakkuk knows that the Lord is his strength. We, too, can always be thankful, even in desperate circumstances, for the Lord has promised to deliver us from evil, and He will do it!

## Connect

### 1. Have a volunteer read aloud Luke 18:9–14.

- a. The Pharisee's thanksgiving is not meant to bring glory to God, but to himself. We do this when we compare our lives to the plight of others and revel in how lucky or good we are. Our thanks needs to center on God's grace to us. We need to intercede in prayer for those who are less fortunate than us.
- b. Answers will vary. Participants need to focus on God's character (His holiness, omniscience, omnipotence, etc.) and His acts (sending Christ for our salvation, giving us the gift of the Spirit, etc.).

### 2. Have a volunteer read aloud Romans 5:9–11.

- a. God saved us through Christ's death on the cross while we were still His enemies. He grants us salvation and new life without any merit or contribution from us.
- b. Answers will vary.

## Vision

As you end this series of studies on prayer, be mindful of all the things God has done during the weeks we have gathered together. Let your closing prayer be one of praise and thanksgiving.