

# *The Practice of Prayer*

## TEACHING NOTES

**The practice of prayer**

**Roles of prayer for the believer**



Honor God by acknowledging who He is, what He has done, and what He is doing (Colossians 1:3-5)

### KEY VERSES

Psalm 46:10  
Colossians 1:3-14

### KEY THEMES

God communicates  
God uses people of faith



Present our requests to Him – both for ourselves and others (Colossians 1:9-12)



Communion & fellowship to know Him personally (Colossians 1:10)

### **Improving in prayer**

#### **Lesson Objective:**

*To develop the practice of prayer in our lives*

## PERSONAL STUDY

### Study 1

#### Prepare your heart and mind

As you silence your mind, ask the Holy Spirit to help open your heart so you can become more sensitive to the wisdom and insight of God and what He desires for you in relation to your prayer life.



#### Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

In verse 17, Paul instructs the Thessalonians to never stop praying. How does prayer fit into your average day? If it doesn't, why do you think this is?

Often times, prayer is thought to have a specific posture and take place at a particular time of day such as: first thing in the morning, before we eat, or before we go to bed. These times are significant, but God is giving us a precious invitation to have a constant connection with Him throughout our entire day. If we are to pray without ceasing, then every second of the day is suitable for prayer.

As you look at how you described your daily prayer life above, is there room for more spontaneous times of prayer? If so, how and when?

God desires to have a constant connection with us. This week, try to be aware of times you can include God in your daily routine. A few opportunities may include: taking your daily challenges to God or interjecting short thoughts of praise, thanksgiving, or declarations of the characteristics of God. Take a moment to do this now.

How do you remind yourself to do important things in life?

Just as you use reminders in everyday life, you can use reminders to help become more conscious of praying throughout the day. Some examples may include: setting your phone alarm or computer notification for every hour; placing a post-it at your bathroom sink with 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, or designating specific times for prayer such as while driving or washing dishes. This type of prayer does not take the place of a disciplined time of study and prayer, but is an extension of it.

**Read Psalm 46:10**

Prayer is a personal dialog with God. We talk to God and He communicates back with us. In looking back over the past teachings in Equipping the Church, recall three specific times God communicated with His people.

Just as God had a personal dialogue with Adam and Eve in the garden, Moses at the burning bush, Abraham at the altar with Isaac, or Paul on the road to Damascus, God desires to communicate with us also.

How would you describe the interaction between two people in a conversation? What are the roles of each participant?

In a healthy conversation, people do the following: have an awareness of the other person, take turns listening and talking, and wait patiently for their turn to talk while processing what they are hearing. When we have a deep heartfelt conversation with someone we come away from that experience with a better understanding of that person. The same is true when we have conversational prayer with God. It brings us to a deeper relationship. Talking with God is different than talking to God.

What are ways you can improve talking with God?

Using a prayer journal is one way you can slow down and organize your thoughts as you pray. Try writing out your prayers for a week. This not only slows your thoughts down, it allows you to look back at how God has answered prayers.

**Key verse**

*Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.* – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Using the provided scripture card, work on memorizing 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Place the card somewhere you will see it often during the week and read the verse out loud each time you see it.

**Prayer time**

Begin by thanking Jesus for removing the barrier of sin by dying on the cross, allowing direct communication with God. Ask Him to help you develop a lifestyle of prayer that does not come from duty or obligation, but from a desire to have a loving personal relationship with the Creator of the universe.

## Study 2

### Prepare your heart and mind

Open your time with an expectation for what God is going to show you during this time with Him. God desires that we would pursue Him personally. Ask Him to help you see what He has for you.

### Why pray?

Most of us know we should pray, but do we really understand why? God created us to be in relationship with Him and each other. Think for a moment about the people you are closest to. How did your relationship develop to where it is today? In order for us to know God personally and not just facts about Him, we need to experience Him personally. Prayer and reading His Word are two of the best ways to do that.

Sometimes we approach prayer with beliefs that we have developed from our worldview. These beliefs hinder our ability to engage with God through praying. One belief is that God is distant and does not care about the details of our lives, but the Bible says differently. The truth is God is so loving and powerful that, unlike people, He is always available and cares about what we are facing in life.

We need to see prayer as a simple, honest conversation with God. Consider what takes place when you invite a friend out for a meal or coffee to catch up with them. The simple act of pursuing friendships provides great principles to guide us in prayer with God:

Set aside regular times to talk with God.

Pick a place where you won't be distracted and can focus.

Read a portion of God's Word. A Bible reading plan can help with this. A good friend takes an interest in what is important to the other person. The best way for us to know what is on God's heart and mind is to spend time with Him in His Word.

Ask God how you can be more focused on what He is doing around you.

Share with God what's on your heart and mind. Ask Him for insight and perspective with regard to the things you are facing.

Spend some time being quiet and listening for Him to guide your thoughts. God may remind you of certain truths from His Word, He might give you a person to pray for, or He might simply fill you with His peace.

A typical conversation goes back and forth. Feel the freedom to do the same with God. As you practice, this will become more and more normal.

## Practicing prayer

Spend some time now talking to God. Use the following steps as a guide to help you focus.

Find a quiet place where you can be free from distractions. You may need to turn off your cell phone – people can wait a few moments for you to get back to them. Setting boundaries like these are helpful when establishing new habits.

One simple way to start is by sharing with God what has been happening in your life. (Yes, He already knows, but this step helps you to focus and God to begin to direct your thoughts.) You could start by finishing one of these statements, *God, yesterday was...* or *Lately, I have been feeling... because...*

Once you have shared what comes to mind, sit quietly and ask God if He has anything He would like to respond with. Try to sit quietly for a minute (or longer if you like). If He prompts your mind with something, reflect on it. If it is in line with God's Word, consider your response. If it goes against God's truth you can dismiss it and ask God to help you discern His voice above the other thoughts that might come to you. If you are still unsure as to the source of this thought, ask a mature believer to help you compare it to the truth in God's Word.

Spend some time reading truth from the Bible. Take a moment and read Psalm 143:10. Read this verse through 2-3 times. What is God saying in this verse? What do you learn about God? Ask God how you should respond to this passage.

Talk to God about what you just read. Ask for His insight on applying this passage to your life. Tell Him how you struggle to live out this passage. Ask for His strength and courage to follow through.

Lastly, it can be very helpful to have a small journal or notebook where you can write down the date, some of the things you have been praying about, the passage you read, and anything you feel the Lord has put on your mind during this prayer time. You can then look back later and be encouraged with how God has led you and responded to the needs you have put before Him.

*Special note: If the idea of a spiritual journal is something you would like to try, we would love to provide you with one. Please stop by the Info Center after Equipping the Church next week to pick one up.*

## Key verse

Continue working on memorizing 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

## PARENT GUIDE

### The Practice of Prayer

Psalm 46:10 says, *“Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.”*

What does it mean to “be still”? How can we “be still” with the Lord? How many times do we ask God for things and yet we don’t stop and listen? It takes practice to actually learn how to quiet our mind. As a parent, this is a good time to introduce the idea of a quiet time with God to your children.

### Table Talk

Ask: Who is your best friend? What is their favorite food? What is their favorite color? How do you know these things?

Say: You know these things because you spend time with your best friend. God wants to spend time with us too.

Ask: What are some ways we can spend time with God?

Read: Mark 1:35 with your children.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus went away to pray? Why do we pray? How do you think it makes God feel when we pray?

### Quiet Time Activity

Parents, talk about your quiet time with God this week. Discuss with your child ways that they can begin to have their own quiet time with God and what it might look like.

Set a specific time this week for your family to spend quiet time with God. Take about 5-10 minutes from your day to listen and pray to God together. Bring your Bible, a journal, and a pen/pencil to write down a prayer to God.

Read one of the following verses during your family’s quiet time: Psalm 46:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Colossians 4:2, or Joshua 1:8.

## ADDITIONAL STUDY

Why pray? In the American culture of high productivity and because of our fixation with squeezing every last minute out of the day, we fail to see the value of quiet, still times of prayer with the Lord. It makes us feel unproductive as though we are not accomplishing anything. How many times have you sat down to pray and your to-do list keeps scrolling through your mind? The truth is, there is nothing more worthwhile for the believer than to sit in the presence of the Lord in prayer and to have fellowship with His Spirit. Let's take a look at how the early church leaders valued and benefitted from the practice of prayer.



### **Read Acts 13:1-3**

What did the practice of prayer cause these men to receive from the Holy Spirit?

Do you think that Barnabas and Saul would say that their time was wasted as they sought the Lord in prayer? Why or why not?

How did this encounter build their dependence on God?

This short story is one of many in the Bible that clearly illustrates the necessity of prayer in the life of believers. Prayer is one of the ways God aligns our wills with His. When we have fellowship with God in prayer, He gives us guidance and direction. Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us that God's ways are much higher than our ways. And as Romans 12:1-2 describes allowing ourselves to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Taking time to pray is one of the best ways to allow God to renew our minds.