

KNOWING GOD THROUGH PRAYER

Build a foundational understanding of what prayer is—a two-way conversation of listening, thanking, asking, confessing, adoring, and connecting with God—and why and how we pray.

THE DISCUSSION

STARTING THE DISCUSSION

1. What words or phrases come to mind when you think about prayer?
2. If you could ask God one thing, what would you say? If you could hear one thing from God, what would you like to hear?
3. Over the last month, how often have you prayed, and how would you describe that experience?

DIALOGUE TOGETHER

What does the Bible say about prayer? Look up some or all of the following verses: Proverbs 15:8, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Matthew 5:44, Matthew 9:38, Philippians 4:6, Ephesians 6:18, Romans 12:12, James 5:13, Colossians 4:2-4.

4. What stands out about prayer? What is confusing? What is encouraging? What do we learn about the power of prayer?
5. Read Matthew 6:5-13. What stands out about this prayer? What does it mean that God's name is hallowed? How do you think we can adore and praise God more?
6. Why is it important to pray for "God's will to be done"? Seeing the list of verses that are part of God's will for us—how can you incorporate that into your prayer life?
7. Why do you think God wants to hear what our needs are? Why do you think God wants us to pray for other people? What's one or two ways you could grow in

praying for your own needs and the needs of others? Why could practicing adoring God before you ask him for things be a helpful practice?

8. Why do you think we should ask for God's forgiveness? What are the benefits of regularly confessing your sins?
9. What temptations are you currently facing? How can you take these temptations to God in prayer more and more? What next step can you take in pursuing holiness?
10. Why is acknowledging God as our Father important? How does seeing God as your Father make you feel? How could acknowledging God as Father affect your prayer life?

Read the following passages: Matthew 14:23, Mark 6:46, Luke 6:12, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16.

11. What stands out about Jesus and his prayer life? How did Jesus demonstrate the priority of prayer? Are there things you need to cut back on (social media, entertainment, etc.) to create more quiet space for prayer?

THOUGHTS, TAKE-AWAYS

GOING DEEPER

BY BROOKE BARNETT

Background content for the discipler to read before the lesson and disciples to read after.

Prayer is possible because—through Christ—God has provided a special way for his people to talk to him. It was his idea. When we come to God in prayer through Christ, we can know that he sees us as righteous because of Jesus and that he loves us unendingly. Nothing can separate us from that love (Romans 8:38-39). It's a safe space where we are always welcome. We don't have to be eloquent; he simply wants to talk to us.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT PRAYER

There is no better way to know God's thoughts on prayer than to hear directly from his Word:

- 2 Chronicles 7:14: “[I]f my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”
- Proverbs 15:8: “The LORD [...] delights in the prayers of the upright” (NLT).
- Matthew 5:44: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”
- Matthew 9:38: “Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”
- Philippians 4:6: “Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done” (NLT).
- Ephesians 6:18: “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.”
- Romans 12:12: “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

- James 5:13a: “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.”
- Colossians 4:2: “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Take a look at Mathew 6:5-13, a great passage for studying prayer. You can use the different elements of Jesus's instructed prayer as a model for your own prayers:

1. Praise and adore the Father

Remember that God cares about you deeply. You bring him joy. In Christ, you have been adopted into his family; you are a child of God (Romans 8:16) and you delight him. In response, we offer our adoration of him. Here are some thoughts from Sara Hagerty, author of *Adore*: “As you pray, start with a word or phrase which resonates with your particular need that day.” Pick up the Psalms and let your mind grab hold of a word or phrase within that psalm which resonates with you. Write it down or say it aloud. Practice telling God who he is; this practice takes you beyond reading to receiving. For example, let's say I'm caught in a cycle of condemning myself for whatever reason—there is no better time than this moment of darkness to remember that God is faithful. This is where I want to start my prayers. *God, you are faithful. You are faithful when I am fearful. I can count on you. You will not leave me.* I start here and carry this conversation throughout my day, scribbling notes in my journal from a new phrase of adoration which came to me on my way down the stairs or while peeling carrots at the sink.”

2. Ask that God's will be done

To pray for God's will to be done in our lives is an act of surrender. We can see Jesus model this right before he died, when he said: “Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine” (Luke 22:42, NLT). He boldly asks God for

what he needs, but also surrenders to God's plans. While we may not know every step and plan God has for us, we do know a few things that are part of his will for us. It's God's will for us to be sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3). It is God's will for us to not conform to the way of the world (Romans 12:2); it's his will for us to give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:8); and it's his will for us to do good (1 Peter 2:15).

3. Ask for what you need

Share with the Lord the things that are on your mind and the areas of life where you need his wisdom and help—he loves to hear from us. Share with him your hopes, your fears, your needs, your wants. He wants to hear it all. If you know someone in need of prayer, this is a good place to pray for them as well.

4. Confess your sin

Tell God that you are sorry for areas where you have fallen short or an area where you are holding on to bitterness. Ask God for forgiveness. Ask him to strengthen you by his Holy Spirit so you won't fall into this sin again. And always remember that God is full of grace and forgiveness—it's who he is. Don't believe anything that is contrary to this. God's kindness leads us towards repentance (Romans 2:4) If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

5. Ask for God's help when you are tempted.

Ask God to help you pursue holiness today. Pray against bad things and pray for good things. Ask for God's blessing over your campus, your neighborhood, your life, your family and friends, your work. Consider the acronym ACTS as you

pray: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. Consciously address each of these stages as you pray.

JESUS MADE PRAYING A PRIORITY

Matthew 14:23, Mark 6:46, Luke 6:12, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16

Throughout the gospels we find Jesus removing himself to quiet places for prayer. It seems that he needed and wanted personal time with God and made this a priority in the midst of so many responsibilities. If the King of kings and Savior of the world needed this time of prayer, how much more do we need this time, too? Matt Chandler, a pastor and author, says, "Prayer is difficult because it's spiritual warfare." If we are to lead a life of prayer, it will be a battle to commit to this lifestyle. We will need to cut back on other priorities and remove distractions in order to commit to prayer. But if we do, our prayer life will drastically improve our spiritual and emotional well-being, while also changing the lives of countless others who we commit to pray for. It's hard work, but it is totally worth it!

ADD A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- Pray for each other outside of your discipleship times, but also while you are together. Find out what's on each other's mind. You can pray more generally about issues in their life, but also pray powerful things for them directly from the Bible.
- Walk through your campus or around town and pray as you go. Stop at different locations and pray together for professors, students, civic leaders, and neighbors to come to know Christ.
- Discuss and decide on a time and place each day when you are going to spend time in God's Word and in prayer. It can even start with just five minutes a day. Start making a practice of recording prayer requests in a journal so that you can actively watch how God is answering them and moving in your heart.