

Spiritual Formation

Growing Into the Image of Christ



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Session 6: Prayer

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Main Idea

- **The second most important spiritual discipline is prayer. After hearing from God, it is important that we speak to God. Prayer is difficult because people have an ineffective method. Praying Scriptures is the right method. And modeling your prayers off of prayers in Scripture is also important.**



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How can the Man/Woman of God Grow Spiritually

- **God wants His people to talk to Him.**
- **The Word of God informs both how we talk to God and how we talk to other people.**
- **When prayer is done consistently and properly, it causes enormous spiritual growth.**



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Prayer—The Problem

- **We say the same old things the same old way. We say the same old things about the same old things.**
—It's boring.
- **People think they are unspiritual because they don't want to pray.**
—If you have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, then you are spiritual.
- **You are not the problem—it's your method.**



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Prayer—the Problem

- **The problem is not that you pray about the same old things**
—Family, future, finances, work, school, church, and a current crisis.
- **The problem in prayer is we SAY the same old things about the same old things.**
- **The solution is to pray through a passage of Scripture.**
—I will model Psalm 23



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Praying Through Psalms

- The words are divinely inspired.
- Pray through a Psalm line by line.
- This method expands or contracts to whatever time you have available.
- Why are the Psalms especially useful for prayer?



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Praying Through Other Scriptures

- You are not limited to the Psalms.
- NT letters are probably the second best choice.
 - I will model James 4
- Narratives are also good for prayer.
 - I will model Matthew 4:13-25
 - Note: In prayer, you look at Psalms and epistles microscopically; in narrative, you look at the big picture.



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Activity

- **ACTIVITY:** At this point I want you to pray through a Psalm. First we will do this as a group, where each person takes just one verse. We will go in a circle. Then I want each person to go to a quiet spot and pray through an entire Psalm. If the Psalm finishes before your prayer does, then go to another one. We will take 15 minutes to do this.

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Trouble Shooting

- **What do you do if you finish praying the scripture, but not everything in your normal list was covered?**
 - Just add them to the end.
 - Make sure you start with the Scripture rather than your list.



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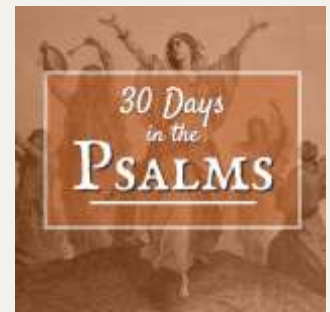
Biblical Examples of Praying Psalms

- **Jesus prayed a Psalm in Matthew 27:46 and Luke 23:46.**
–Psalms 22 and 31.
- **In Acts 4:23-26, the Apostles prayed a Psalm.**
–Psalm 2
- **Acts 2:42 says—“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.**
–In Greek, it actually says “the prayers,” which means sets of prayers were in mind.

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How to Choose a Psalm

- **Don Whitney gives a useful 30-day method.**
–There are usually 30 days in a month, and there are 150 Psalms. So five Psalms can be assigned to each day. Psalm 1, 31, 61, 91, and 121 would be assigned to the first of the month. Pick which one or ones will guide your prayer best that day. Then Psalm 2, 32, 62, 92, and 122 for the second of the month. Scan through the five and then pick which one will serve your prayer best.



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Why Should God Answer Our Prayers?

- In most prayers recorded in the Bible, the one praying gives God reasons to answer favorably.
 - We should do the same.
- The most fundamental reason we should give is Christ's work on the cross.
 - It is very important to pray in Jesus's name.



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Reasons God Should Answer Our Prayers

- Reason One: God made a specific promise, and so you remind Him of it.
 - Example: Genesis 32:11-12—" Please rescue me from my brother Esau, for I am afraid of him; otherwise, he may come and attack me, the mothers, and their children. ¹² You have said, 'I will cause you to prosper, and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea, too numerous to be counted.'"
- There is a right and wrong way to do this. Three categories of divine promises
 1. Those given to all people; 2) Those given to all believers; 3) Those given to specific individuals.



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Reasons God Should Answer Our Prayers

- **Reason Two: Appealing to an attribute of God.**

- Psalm 25:6-7: David appeals to God's compassion.
- Psalm 51: David appeals to God's love.

- **Reason Three: Scriptural prayers appeal to the glory of God.**

- Numbers 14:15-16; Psalm 79.



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Reasons God Should Answer Our Prayers

- **Reason Four: A favorable answer would show others the way of God.**

- Psalm 67:1-2, 7.

- **Reason Five: You can appeal to your relationship with God.**

- Psalm 119:94

- **Reason Six: Past faithful obedience.**

- 2 Kings 20:3



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Reasons God Should Answer Our Prayers

- **Reason Seven: Promised future obedience.**
 - Psalm 119:17, 145.
 - This is not quid pro quo.



- **Reason Eight: We ask God to answer according to His will.**
 - 1 John 5:14-15—“This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him.”

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The Benefits of Giving God Reasons

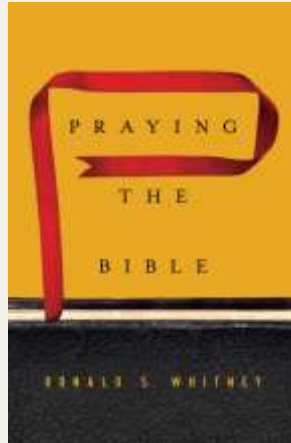
- It helps us pray more effectively.
- It helps us pray with more faith and eagerness.
- It helps us pray with a better understanding of God’s character.
- It helps us pray less flippantly and less selfishly.
- Finally, our motive must be for the glory of God and the fame of His name.



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Personal Application

- **We already did this when you prayed a Psalm earlier.**
 - If you want more insight on this, Don Whitney wrote a very short book on this.



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Group Assignment

In this lesson, I purposefully left out the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. Take this prayer and construct your own prayer based on it by using the principles given in this lesson. In other words, let the words of the passage lead your prayer, but also as you make your requests to God, appeal to biblical the reasons He should answer your prayer. In order to do this as a group, each student will take one line from the prayer and develop part of the group prayer based on that one line. The group will pray together using the Lord's prayer.

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