



LESSON 4

HOW TO PRAY



You have just learned the importance of reading the Bible. That is the way we hear what God has to say to us. In any good relationship, though, there is communication both ways. God speaks to us through His Word. We speak to God through prayer. This circle of communication is important for spiritual growth as a Christian. In prayer we simply talk to God. You may have seen people pray before—folding their hands, bowing their heads, closing their eyes. You may have many questions about prayer. As new disciples of Jesus Christ, may your cry be the same as Jesus' first disciples: *"Lord, teach us to pray"* (Luke 11:1).

Study Questions

1. Why pray?

This is a good question. It seems somewhat silly at first to talk to God, who is invisible. What good does it accomplish? We all know of people who have prayed for something and have not gotten what they earnestly desired. Let us look to the Bible for answers.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

What does this simple verse tell us to do? _____

Think of a relationship that you have with someone you love very much. How often do you talk to that person? Now think about someone that you are barely friends with. How often do you talk to that person? As a general rule, we have a better relationship with those we talk to frequently than those we do not.

As a Christian, what is your relationship to God? (See 1 John 3:1, Galatians 4:6) _____

Since God is our Heavenly Father, we can approach Him with confidence. (See Hebrews 4:16). With a correct view of God, we will see ourselves for what we really are—sinners in need of grace. Knowledge of sin will create in our hearts a sense of helplessness.

How did Hannah illustrate helplessness in her prayer? (1 Samuel 1:9-18) _____



Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, is the best example of what prayer is and why we should pray. Read these verses and write your observations about Jesus and what His “prayer life” was like.

(Matthew 14:23, 19:13, 26:36; Mark 6:46, 14:32; Luke 5:16, 6:12, 22:40-42) _____

We pray in the name of Jesus (on the basis of who He is and what He has done) and He will answer prayers according to His will. God is not the ultimate vending machine, giving us what we want when we press the right buttons.

Read John 15:7, 16, 16:23.

- Write down your thoughts on what Jesus says about prayer. _____

Let’s shift gears now. We come to God humbly in prayer because He desires us to, to let God into our situation, and to lay hold of the grace given to us in the Gospel.

2. How do I pray?

This is the next question we must ask. There are many good resources that give us hints about prayer. For starters, let us look quickly at a simple way to pray. It is called “ACTS.” Each letter represents a part of prayer.

A—Adoration: In this phase of prayer we praise God for who He is and what He has done. We lavish love on God who has loved and continues to love us so much.

- How does David adore God in 1 Chronicles 29:10-12? _____

C—Confession: As we see God clearly through His Word, we are once again reminded of our complete sinfulness. Through confession, we agree with God that our sin is wrong. We tell God we have wronged Him.

- What does the Bible say about confession in Psalm 32:5? _____

T—Thanksgiving: We remember and thank God for all things given to us.

- Let’s get back to David’s prayer in 1 Chronicles 29. In verse 13, what does he say? _____



S—Supplication: Here we bring specific requests to God—asking Him to intervene in a situation in our life, in the lives of others, etc.

- What was Moses' supplication in Numbers 12:13? _____

Jesus Christ, when asked by His disciples about prayer, gave us the words of the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer is a great example for us as we learn to pray. Please consult Luther's Small Catechism for further training on how to use the Lord's Prayer.

- Now read Matthew 6:5-13. What does Jesus say about prayer before He speaks the Lord's Prayer? _____

- Name all of the petitions (requests) mentioned in the Lord's Prayer. _____

- In Matthew 6:9-10, who is the prayer directed to? What is said to this one? _____

- In Matthew 6:11-13 the prayer shifts, How is this part of the prayer different than the first part? _____

3. What do I pray for?

We have now looked at why one should pray and how one should pray. Now we ask this question: "What should I pray for?" A simple answer would be anything and everything. As one grows in the Lord, reads more of the Bible, and learns the heart of God, as a result he or she will want to pray for things that God desires. A new Christian might pray for a million dollars or a fancy new car. Mature Christians lift everything up to the Lord in prayer and pray for things such as spiritual growth, that the Bible might be preached fervently, that the Gospel might spread to the end of the world, and that souls might be saved. These are things close to the heart of God. What are some things that people in the Bible prayed for? Let's dig into the Word.

What did Paul pray about for the Ephesian Christians in Ephesians 1:15-23? _____



What did the early church pray for in Acts 1:24-25? _____

Read 1 Kings 3:6-14. What was Solomon’s prayer? How did God answer Him? _____

We pray for all things—our family, our friends, our teachers, our employers (if you have a job), etc. I read something one time that really grabbed my attention: “To see someone is to pray for them.” As we grow in compassion for others, we will see the desire to pray for them and for whatever situation they may be facing. What about when we don’t know what to pray for?

- Read Romans 8:26 and write out the answer to this question. _____

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4 and give a short list of who we are to pray for. _____

What are some other things that the Bible tells us to pray for and about? (Read Psalm 122:6; James 1:5, 5:13) _____

I pray that this lesson will create in you a desire to pray to our Heavenly Father. He longs to hear your prayers. You have become righteous in Christ by His grace and through faith.

- What does James 5:16 teach us about prayers made by Christians? _____

God bless you as you begin to see Him in all things in prayer! I recommend that you search the Bible to see



other great examples of what and how people in the Bible prayed. Other great tools for learning how to pray are as follows: *Prayer* by Ole Hallesby; *A Simple Way to Pray* by Martin Luther.

Assignments to help you prepare for Lesson #5

- 1) Continue using the reading plan from Lesson #3 that you started.
- 2) Complete Lesson 5, *Attributes of God*, before the next appointment with your discipler.
- 3) Memorize Philippians 4:6-7.
- 4) Set aside a specific time and place each day to pray and implement the things you have learned in this lesson during that time.
- 5) Stop to think about your life in Christ. Write down ways that you have seen God work in your life recently.

NOTES: