

PRAYERFULNESS

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD

WEEKS 4-8

**GROW
TOGETHER
IN JESUS**
FOR GOD'S GLORY

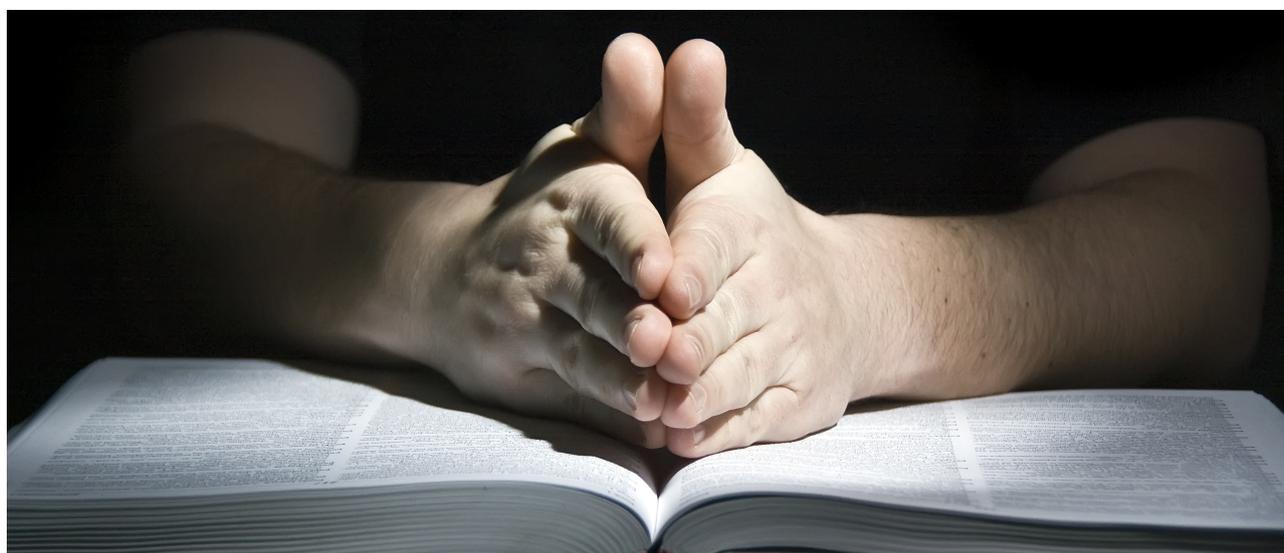


Home Groups @ Grace

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Introduction to the Study Guide

Prayerfulness: Communicating with God

This Bible study series is designed to work alongside the Sunday sermon series on the Lord's Prayer to help us think more deeply about how we should be communicating with God.

This said, these studies won't necessarily correspond directly with the sermons, which are going to deal with the *When, How, Who* and *What* of prayer. Instead, most of the study material will focus especially on the different parts of prayer: *Thanks, Praise, Request* and *Confession*.

It is our hope and prayer, that through these studies and the parallel sermon series, each one of us will develop a deeper and richer prayer life, for our joy and spiritual health and for the glory of God.

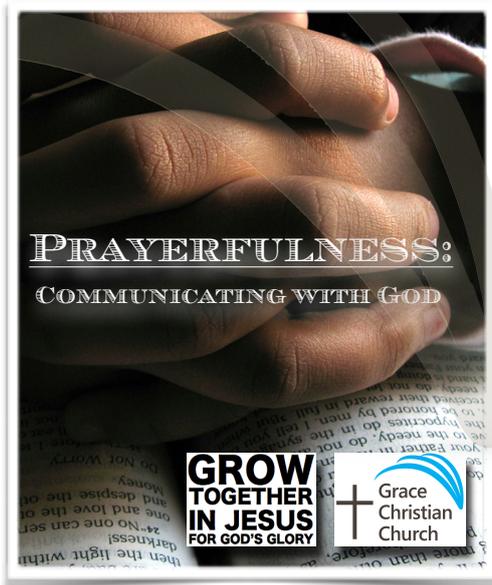
- Ps Rick Zylstra

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

(Matthew 6:9-13)

"Prayer is the open admission that without Christ we can do nothing. And prayer is the turning away from ourselves to God in the confidence that He will provide the help we need. Prayer humbles us as needy, and exalts God as wealthy."

- John Piper (US pastor and writer)



"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.'"

**- Jesus Christ
(Matthew 6v9)**

How to use this study guide

Each weekly study in this guide is broken into two major sections:

Sunday Sermon

Sermon Notes

The first section of each study is based around the Sunday sermon. There is a section for you to write notes during the message. You might want to write down

- The major points of the message
- Things that interested you or surprised you
- Important verses and other verse references

This will help you follow what is being taught, but it will also help you remember what you learnt when you look over your notes later.

The Big Idea

This block is where you can write the one Big Idea of the message. Every message should have one simple, clear '**Big Idea**' which you can take away.

Questions

It's normal to go away from a Bible message still having questions, and not quite understanding things. This section is for you to write down those things, so that you can try to find out later, maybe by asking the pastor, or discussing it with your home group.

Mid-week Home Group Bible Study

To get the most out of these studies, you should try and attend a weekly home group Bible study. If you have the time, look over the studies before going to a group. You may like to write down your answers and other study notes in your own notebook.

As you go through each study, you will see pictures next to the questions. Sometimes, there will be more than one picture.

: When you see this picture, you need to do some thinking. The answers to these questions will come from your own knowledge and experience.

: When you see this picture, you need to put what you've learned into action. It's about asking, "What does this teach me about being a follower of Jesus?"

: When you see this picture, you will need to look in your Bible. Don't be afraid to use the index in your Bible to find the verses - that's what it's there for!

: When you see this picture, you need to discuss this with the other people in your group. It's great to learn from each other!

Prayer Points

Finally, there is a section to write prayer points. This way you can remember to pray for each other during and after the group meeting, and also keep track of prayers answered. Prayer and praying for each other is a vitally important part of Christians meeting together.

Week 4

Sermon: The 'When' of Prayer

Matthew 6:5-6

Sermon Notes

What is the Big Idea?

What questions do I still have?

Study: Thinking Through Prayer - Week 4

(Matthew 6:6)

Q1.  When do you find it easiest to pray? Why?

(open question)

Different people will answer this question in different ways. In the morning; in the evening; when I'm alone; when I'm happy; when I'm desperate; when I'm feeling close to God etc... This is more of an ice breaker?

Q2.  When do you find it hardest to pray? Why

Again, different people will answer this question in different ways. When I'm tired; when everything is going along nicely and I don't have any pressing needs; when I've fallen into sin; when my kids are climbing all over me; when I'm super busy; when I'm stressed; when I'm distracted etc... Again, this is just to get people thinking and talking.

Q3.   Read Matthew 6:6 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17. How do we reconcile these two passages? Is prayer meant to happen any time, or at a specific time? Can you think of any Bible figures that support your answer?

Paul tells us that we need to pray "without ceasing" and Jesus tells us that we need to "pray in our room". Of course, the solution to these differences is NOT to live in our rooms so that we can pray without ceasing in them, rather, we need to understand that Jesus is speaking out against showy, flashy praying and is emphasising that prayer is first and foremost between an individual and God. Jesus is highlighting the need to spend private blocks of time with God in prayer. While Paul is highlighting that we should be in constant communion with God as we move through the day. As such, it is biblical that we have aim to have specific times of prayer, as well as living a life of spontaneous prayer.

Examples:

- Eliezer, steward of Abraham spontaneously prayed for a bride for Isaac (Gen 24:12-14)
- Samson spontaneously prayed for one last victory (Judges 16:28)

- *Jonah spontaneously prayed to God from the belly of the fish (Jonah 2)*
- *Daniel had a specific prayer time (Daniel 6:10)*
- *Jesus would withdraw and have specific times of prayer (Luke 5:16) Etc...*

Q4.  What do you think is potentially dangerous about only ever praying spontaneously?

Perhaps beginning to treat God like a Genie – “There’s a problem – I’d better get God to fix it” Perhaps there is a risk of focusing too much on ourselves, and not enough on others. After all, OUR needs are in our faces more of the time, than the needs of OTHERS. Prayer could become less “well rounded” – with important aspects of prayer being forgotten, such as praise or confession. One of the reasons that Jesus gives the Lord’s Prayer is so that we pray in a “balanced” way, covering the various things that need to be covered. Etc...

Q5.  What do you think is potentially dangerous about only ever praying at a set time each day?

There is a danger that your time may get divided up into the “sacred” and the “secular”. God gets 7:15am till 7:30am and then the rest of the day is about work, rest and play. This is an unhealthy mindset to develop on a lot of levels. Regular communication with God reminds us that we are needy and that God is with us every minute of every day. Etc...

Q6.   What do you find most difficult about implementing Jesus’ instruction in Matthew 6:6? Share suggestions with one another as to how to overcome these difficulties.

Personally I find it very hard to get away from the kids. I find it hard to be somewhere where I am distraction free. This verse also implies that we set aside a deliberate time and place. This too can be hard.

Q7. 📖💭 What are some of the “conditions” that God mentions when it comes to answering our prayers? Consider the following verses:

- James 1:6-8
- Luke 11:5-10
- James 4:2-3
- Psalm 66:16
- Isaiah 59:1-2
- 1 John 5:14-15

This question could potentially lead down some rabbit trails. Leaders be prepared.

We must pray with faith, we must pray persistently, we must not pray selfishly, we must pray with clear consciences having confessed our sin, we must pray according to God’s will.

Q8. 📖💭 Which of the above “conditions” do you find the most difficult in your prayer life? Why?

(Open question - try to get your groups members to think carefully about the “WHY” question.)

Q9. 👤👤👤 What are some practical ways we can become more passionate about our prayer lives?

Share testimonies of answered prayers; pray together; meditate on Philippians 4:6-7 and realise that prayer is an alternative to worry; diligently look for evidences of answered prayer in your life, set realistic prayer goals, mediate on the wonder of having access to talk freely with the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe etc...

Q10. 🏃 What could you do tomorrow to begin improving your prayer life?

(open question)

Prayer Points:

Week 5

Sermon: The 'How' of Prayer

Matthew 6v7-8

Sermon Notes

What is the Big Idea?

What questions do I still have?

Study: Thankfulness in Prayer - Week 5

(Luke 17:11-19)

God's Command to be Thankful

Q1.  Ask three people in your group to read the following verses: Ephesians 5:20, Philippians 4:6 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

- a) What phrases in these verses describe how thankful God expects us to be?

Giving thanks "always", being thankful "in everything", give thanks "in all circumstances".

- b) Does this sound impossible to you? Why or why not? What do you think that Paul is getting at?

At first read, these verses can often seem impossible, because bad things happen, frustrating things happen, and life isn't always easy. If we're honest with ourselves I suspect that sometimes we are all decidedly UN-thankful for certain things that happen to us.

Paul is commanding us to have hearts and eyes that are always ready to see the faithful hand of God in any given circumstance.

Our Struggle to be Thankful

Read [Luke 17:11-19](#).

Q2.   Discuss the "disconnect" between how passionate these men were with their "prayer request" (v12-13) and how passionate they were about being thankful. Do you ever see this tendency in your prayer life?

There is a lot of passion when the men come to Jesus. They deliberately “met” him so that they could loudly plead with him, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” They are very polite, they acknowledge that He is above them and they just cry out for mercy. But then, as soon as their “prayer request” is answered, nine of them run off without giving Jesus a second thought. There is no seeking Him out. There is no “O Master you are wonderful”. There is no “Thank you for having mercy on us”. Their passion to “ask” is not matched by a passion to “thank”.

Many of us would find that we are better at “asking” God for things than we are at “thanking” him.

Q3.  Brainstorm possible reasons for why the nine lepers didn't return to Jesus. Do any of these reasons resonate with you?

Perhaps they were so desperate to see their families; perhaps they were so excited that they forgot; perhaps they had what they wanted and now they didn't think they needed Jesus anymore; perhaps they thought they would find him later etc...

Q4.   Discuss how the following three things can rob us of thankful hearts. Can you think of a time when you have been affected by each?

a) Familiarity (see Numbers 11:1-6)

In a country where we are so blessed we can so easily take for granted all that God has given us. We can get so used to a pantry full of food, or to living in a peaceful country, or to enjoying good health, that we stop seeing these things as blessings from God, and start seeing them as our rights. There's an interesting example of this in Numbers 11:1-6 where the Israelites start complaining about the manna. If you have time it may be worth reading these verses. Initially the Israelites were SO thankful for the manna, but then it became so familiar that they ceased to be thankful.

b) Greed (see Ecclesiastes 5:10)

It's hard for a person who wants more, more, more to ever truly be thankful. The greedy person is in an endless pursuit of more and he or she cannot be satisfied. It's far easier to be thankful if we are content with the things and the circumstances that God has given us.

c) Comparison (see Numbers 11:4-5)

Comparison can rob us of thankful hearts because it takes our eyes off what we ALREADY have, and makes us focus on what we DON'T have. Rather than looking at the manna that God had providentially provided (Psalm 78:25 actually describes manna as "the bread of angels". It was pretty amazing stuff) the Israelites compared what they CURRENTLY had, with what they USED to have. It doesn't matter if we are comparing our situation with someone else's situation, or if we are comparing our current situation with our previous situation, both can potentially rob us of thankful hearts.

Can you think of any other things that rob us of thankful hearts?

Cultivating Thankful Hearts

- Q5.   What can we learn from the one leper who returned about being thankful for answered prayer? Take note of his actions, his words and his posture (see Luke 17:16-17).

He returned quickly, he cried out loudly – perhaps because he was filled with emotion, he fell facedown – because he knew that he didn't deserve such mercy, and he gave glory to God – because he knew that his healing was all because of the power of God and couldn't have happened apart from the power of God. All these things teach us important things about thanking God is prayer. We should thank God quickly rather than slowly. We should thank God humbly, because we don't actually deserve answered prayer. And we should thank God in a way that glorifies him (e.g., thankfulness and praise naturally roll together).

- Q6.   What can we learn from Romans 8:28-29 and James 1:2-3 about being thankful in all of life, no matter what the circumstance? How can remembering the truths of these verses help us cultivate more thankful hearts?

They remind us that God is absolutely in control and that he always has Christian's best interests at heart. His ultimate goal isn't to give us comfortable lives, but is rather, that we be "conformed to the image of His Son". In this

regard we can always be thankful because no matter what is happening, whether good or bad, we can be confident that God is doing what is best for our spiritual good. When a Christian is truly confident of this, “giving thanks in everything” begins to become possible.

Q7.  What are some practical steps that we could take to become more thankful in our prayer lives?

(open question)

Suggestions:

- *Deliberately avoiding those things that rob us of thankful hearts*
- *Deliberately allocating a chunk of our prayer time to “thankfulness”*
- *Regularly counting our blessings.*
- *Regularly thinking about which prayers God has answered.*
- *Sharing with one another ways in which God has answered prayer etc...*

Prayer Points:

Week 6

Sermon: The 'Who' of Prayer

Matthew 6v9-10

Sermon Notes

What is the Big Idea?

What questions do I still have?

Study: Praising God in Prayer - Week 6

Luke 1:39-56

- Q1.  If someone were to ask you “what does it mean to *praise* God in prayer”, how would you answer them? Is it different to *thanking* God in prayer?

PRAISING God in prayer is actually different to THANKING God in prayer. Thanking God is expressing appreciation for what God HAS DONE. Praising God is expressing appreciation for WHO GOD IS. We tell our kids that praising God is “telling Him how special He is”. Praising God is saying, “God, you are wonderful, you are powerful, you are holy, you are loving etc”

- Q2.  Which part of prayer do you think that you find the most difficult – Praising, Asking, Confessing or Thanking? Why?

(open question)

Note: No doubt there will be a range of different answers here, but many people particularly struggle with praise.

- Q3.  Why do you think that so many people find it difficult to Praise God in prayer?

Sometimes people don't know what to say, sometimes people don't realise that it is an important part of prayer, sometimes people feel weird saying such things. In day to day life, we are used to ASKING people for things and THANKING people for things, and when necessary APOLOGISING (repenting) to people for things, but we don't tend to spend a lot of time (if any) PRAISING people for things. Perhaps this makes PRAISING God in prayer seem a little less natural than the other elements of prayer. Furthermore, sometimes our circumstances can crowd out any “feelings” of praise that we might have.

- Q4.   Read Luke 1:39-56, particularly focusing on Mary's prayer. Work through Mary's prayer and try and separate the points of **thanks** from the points of **praise**. Think back to the discussion in Q1. to help you.

This will probably prove a little difficult as the two are often interwoven together, but the exercise should generate some healthy discussion. Remind the group of the distinction between thanks and praise, i.e. that praise is for who God is, and thanks is for what he has done.

Praise

- *My soul magnifies the Lord (v46);*
- *I praise you because you are holy (v49);*
- *I praise you that you are merciful (v50);*
- *I praise the strength of your arm (v51).*

Thanks

- *thank you for looking on my humble estate (v48);*
- *thank you that you have done great things for me (v49);*
- *thank you for scattering the proud (v51);*
- *thank you for bringing the mighty down from their thrones (v52);*
- *thank you for exalting the humble (v52);*
- *thank you for filling the hungry (v53);*
- *thank you for helping Israel (v54).*

In working through this question you may have noticed that often, when we have something to **thank** God for, we simultaneously have something to **praise** God for, namely, the attribute or characteristic that enables God to carry out the particular action.

If we are struggling to **praise** God in prayer, it can be really helpful to look at the things we are **thankful** for, and then consciously think about how God brought that thing to pass. This will give us a point for **praise!**

For example, Mary praised God for the “strength of His arm (v51)”, which was necessary for Him to “fill the hungry” (v53).

- Q5.   Consider the following points of *thanksgiving* and try to think about a corresponding point of *praise*:

- A friend miraculously survives an accident

We can praise God for His mercy and power

- A family member becomes a Christian

We can praise God for His love and mercy

- A church member grows in their faith through a trial

We can praise God for His sovereignty and His wisdom

- Our house sells quickly when we put it on the market

We can praise God for His goodness and faithfulness

- A Non-Christian friend reads their Bible and is deeply convicted of their sin

We can praise God for His holiness and justice

Q6.  Discuss some of the benefits of regularly praising God in prayer. After some discussion, consider the following verses to expand your list.

- Psalm 8:3-4
- Acts 16:25-26
- Psalm 46:1- 3
- Isaiah 29:16
- 2 Corinthians 3:18
- Romans 3:23
- Luke 19:37-40
- Psalm 4:8
- Psalm 89:13-16

Praising God reminds us that we are not the centre of the universe. (Psalm 8:3-4); Praising God reminds us that God is bigger than our problems. (Acts 16:25-26); Praising God reminds us of how secure we are in His arms. (Psalm 46:1-3) Praising God gives us the right perspective on life (Isaiah 29:16); Praising God motivates us to live more godly lives (John Piper often says that we “become what we behold” - 2 Corinthians 3:18); Praising God naturally drives us to confess our sin as it reminds us of how far short we fall of His glory (Romans 3:23); Praising God fulfils our primary purpose as a created being (Luke 19:37-40); Praising God naturally leads to greater Christian peace (Psalm 4:8); Praising God naturally leads to greater Christian joy (Psalm 89:13-16)

- Q7.   Read Hebrews 13:15. In this verse we are told to “continually” praise God. However, if we’re honest with ourselves we have to admit that we all experience times when we simply don’t “feel” like praising God. *WHEN* might we feel this way? *WHAT* should we do about it when we do? Get practical!

I think that we feel this way when we have unconfessed sin in our lives; when we are more focused on our current circumstances than we are on God; when we are under a lot of pressure; when we’re really tired; when we are confused about why God has allowed a certain thing to happen etc...

When we don’t “feel” like praising God – we need to remember that regardless of our circumstances or feelings God is ALWAYS objectively worthy of praise. Perhaps we may need to confess some sin. Perhaps we may need to ask God for a new perspective on some situation. Perhaps we may need to read a portion of Scripture to rekindle our flame of praise. Perhaps we may need some time just to meditate on the objective reality that God is wonderful and pray that God will push it down from our heads and into our hearts.

If we hardly ever “feel” like praising God we might need to go to a friend or elder for some counsel.

- Q8.   List as many things as possible that we can *praise* (not *thank*) God for in prayer.

Suggestions:

He is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, wise, powerful, holy, just, good, loving, merciful, patient, generous, sacrificial, compassionate, perfect, faithful etc...

Q9.   What practical steps can you take to incorporate more PRAISE into your prayer times?

Rather than launching directly into our prayer requests we can form a habit of beginning our prayer times with some points of praise.

Remembering there discussion around Q5., we could make a habit of always praising God, for the attributes that enabled Him to answer particular prayer requests.

Remembering your answers to Q8., we could determine to pray thoughtfully through one or two of God's attributes per day. Etc...

Q10.   Spend some time praising God in prayer as a group.

Prayer Points:

Week 7

Sermon: The 'What' of Prayer (#1)

Matthew 6v11

Sermon Notes

What is the Big Idea?

What questions do I still have?

Study: Asking God in Prayer - Week 7

Philippians 4:6-8, Luke 22:41-42, 1 Timothy 2:1-4, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, Philippians 1:9-11

Q1.   Discuss the following quote:

“Prayer gives us an opportunity to walk into the office of the CEO of the universe and talk about anything we want for as long as we want, any time we want.”

- Steve Farrar (founder of *Men’s Leadership Ministries*)

Do you think that you value prayer as highly as you should?

We should be amazed that the God who holds the Universe in his hands and cares for everything actually gives us personal access to His throne of grace. I think most of us vastly undervalue prayer!

Q2.  Read Philippians 4:6-8.

a) What sorts of things do you tend to worry about? Is there anything in your life right now that you are especially worried about?

(open question)

Try and get people to answer honestly. Do you worry about health issues? Children’s safety? Employment issues? Conflict with people? Spiritual matters?

b) What do you normally do with your worry? Play it over and over in your mind? Shut it out? Try and find a solution? What does Paul tell us to do with our worry?

Try to get people to think deeply and honestly. Perhaps ask you group members to think about something they are currently worried about and how they have handled that worry. Paul tells us that the proper response to worry and anxiety is prayer. In fact, Paul tells us that prayer is an ALTERNATIVE to worry and anxiety.

- c) How do verses 6 and 7 work? How can Paul promise this “peace that surpasses understanding”? Is experiencing such peace an “answer” to prayer, or is it a “by-product” of prayer?

In these verses Paul is NOT talking about specifically praying FOR peace in order that you might experience peace. Rather, he is talking about praying for ANYTHING and EVERYTHING that is concerning you, handing it over to God, and then leaving the outcome in His hands – so that you may experience the peace of God. In this regard, peace is more of a “by-product” of handing our worries to God in prayer. We may not know how it will all pan out, but we can experience the peace of knowing that our good and loving God is somehow going to work all things together for our long term good (see Romans 8v26-30).

Or in different words, this peace that surpasses understanding doesn’t come as a result of answered prayer (that wouldn’t surpass understanding), rather it comes as a result of offered prayer.

- d) How do you think v8-9 connect with v6-7?

Even though the teaching of v8-9 can stand alone, Paul seems to be saying to his readers, “Don’t fret and worry about certain things, don’t turn your anxieties over and over in your head, rather, bring your concerns to God in prayer, and then consciously turn your thoughts to good and edifying things.”

Don’t focus on what “could” go wrong, and on what “might” happen, rather, focus on realities that are true, honourable, just, pure etc.

Note: Ask the group if they find this easy or difficult to do.

- Q3.   Read Luke 22:41-42. Why is it important that we have the same attitude in prayer that Jesus had in v42? Why is it actually a good thing that God doesn’t always give us what we ask for?

We always need to pray in a spirit of submission. God is not a 'genie' that we can simply command. We need to realise that we often don't know what is best for us and for those around us. God however, does!

Prayer would become a horrible curse rather than a blessing if everyone always got what they wanted. Christians would never grow in their faith, because they would pray away every trial. When Christian countries went to war, the results would be catastrophic... etc. Unanswered prayers can be an amazing blessing!

Q4.   Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

a) Do you think that you spend more time praying about your needs, or about the needs of others? Why?

We often find it easier to pray about our wants and our needs than we do about the needs of others. Perhaps this is because we are all a little selfish; perhaps this is because we are more aware of our needs than the needs of others. Perhaps this is because our prayer times are so rushed, that we only make time to pray for our needs. However, James 5:16 clearly tells us to pray for others.

b) What kinds of things does Paul urge us to pray about in these verses? How do each of these apply in 2014?

- All People – We shouldn't limit our prayers to family or friends. We should be very liberal in our prayers – praying even for our enemies. If we see a need – we should bring it to God in prayer.
- For Kings and those in high positions – We should pray for our local councils, our state government, our federal government, our politicians (even the ones we don't like) the G20, the United Nations, other world leaders etc...
- Peace – We should be praying for peace in Australia; peace globally; against terrorism; against war; against religious persecution; against crime; against violence etc...

We should be praying for religious freedom that enables us to live godly, dignified lives. In light of the fact that God desires the salvation of all people, we should also be praying for the salvation of the lost. Again, James 5:16 clearly tells us to pray for others. We need to make sure that we are not selfish with our prayers.

Q5.   Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 and Philipians 1v9-11.

- a) What is the emphasis in these prayer requests? Why should this emphasis feature in our prayers for *ourselves* and our prayers for *others*?

The emphasis in these prayers is spiritual health and progress.

We are physical humans living in a physical world and so much of our prayer time will be spent focusing on physical things. This said, we need to remember that there is a spiritual reality underlying everything in this world, and we need to remember that we are to be heavenly minded. Maybe we should try to find the spiritual that parallels the practical more than we do. Ie... rather than praying that Mrs Jones gets better, full stop, we could pray that she gets better and that the trial helps her to grow in patience, or gives her opportunity to witness... whatever. Every practical matter for prayer has some adjoining spiritual matter for prayer. It is important that we don't get so caught up in the physical that we forget the spiritual. After all, we are supposed to be growing in holiness, Christlikeness and usefulness for the Kingdom.

- b) Using the above verses and any others you can think of, compile a list of prayer requests that relate to spiritual health and progress.

That love for God increases, that knowledge and discernment increases, that we live pure lives, that we grow in righteousness, that our lives bring God glory, that we have evangelistic courage, that we put on the new self and put off the old self, that we do good works, that we bear more fruits of the spirit, that our love for others increases etc...

Emphasise to the group that we are never going to run out of prayer requests when it comes to spiritual growth.

Q6.   Spend some time as a group praying for the physical and spiritual needs of one another and others.

Q7. Optional Extra:   Read Luke 11:5-10 and discuss with the group.

Prayer Points:

Week 8

Sermon: The 'What' of Prayer (#2)

Matthew 6v12-15

Sermon Notes

What is the Big Idea?

What questions do I still have?

Study: Confession in Prayer - Week 8

Luke 18:9-14

Q1.  What do you find hardest about confessing your sin to God in prayer?

(Open question)

Suggestions:

Actually identifying the sin that needs to be confessed; not feeling any sorrow for the sin that should be confessed; feeling so ashamed that you'd rather ignore it than confess it, getting specific about sins that need to be confessed – rather than simply saying "I'm sorry for my sins".

Q2.   Can you think of any Biblical examples of people confessing their sin to God in prayer?

Suggestions:

- *Job (Job 42:6)*
- *David (Psalm 51:1-2);*
- *Daniel- on behalf of Israel (Daniel 9:8- 10 and 16);*
- *The Tax Collector (Luke 18:13);*

Q3.  Read Luke 18:9-14

a) How would you describe the Pharisees prayer (v11-12)? What should we seek to avoid?

Proud, arrogant, he didn't think that he needed to confess anything because he was so good. We should avoid the mistake of thinking that we have nothing to confess. In the words of Isaiah 64:6 we need to remember that all our righteousness is like a polluted garment (filthy rags) in the sight of a holy God. We should praise God in prayer – not praise ourselves.

- b) How would you describe the Tax Collector's prayer (v13)? What should we seek to imitate?

The tax collector's prayer was humble and heartfelt. He was clearly emotional, and felt broken because of his sin. He knew that he had nothing to offer God and so he confessed his sin and threw himself on God's mercy. When we come to God in prayer we shouldn't downplay our sin or try to sweep it under the carpet. We need to humbly confess it, asking for God's forgiving mercy.

- c) What was the result of the Tax Collector's confession (v14)? What is the lesson for those who are not yet Christians?

Verse 14 tells us that he went down to his house "justified". This means that he went home a forgiven Christian. The lesson for Non-Christians is that confession is a necessary part of becoming a Christian. God doesn't want anyone coming to Him in prayer and saying, "here are all the reasons you should let me be a Christian", rather, he wants people coming to him in humility and saying, "I am a guilty sinner, and I desperately need your forgiving mercy." The clear message of the Apostles throughout the New Testament is "Repent and Believe". Non Christians need to CONFESS their sin and TURN FROM their sin, not DENY their sin.

Having considered that confession is a vital part of BECOMING a Christian, we might be tempted to think that confession is unnecessary in the life of a believer. After all, in Christ our sins have been removed as far as the East is from the West (Psalm 103:12). The Bible however, teaches us that ongoing confession is a necessary part of the Christian life.

Q4.  Read 1 John 1:8-10.

- a) What does John say that a Christian needs to believe about sin in v8 and 10? What does he say about the person who denies this truth?

John teaches us that Christians still fall into sin. And he says that someone who denies this truth is clearly not a Christian. In other words, one of the marks of truly being saved is being sensitive the fact that sin still remains within.

- b) What does John tell Christians to do with their sin? What happens when they do this?

John tells Christians that they need to confess their sin. This means that they need to bring it out into the open before God, admitting it, and asking for forgiveness for it. Remember – Jesus himself tells us in the Lord’s prayer to pray – “forgive us our sins”. When they do this, John says that they will be forgiven, and made clean from all unrighteousness?

Note: The logical question that some in the group may ask is, “But aren’t we ALREADY forgiven?” The answer to this question is YES – as far as our salvation is concerned we are absolutely and irrevocably forgiven. But in terms of enjoying a close day to day relationship with God we need to continually confess our sins. The next questions will help unpack this thought.

- Q5.  Read Psalm 32:1-5. How does David feel while there is unconfessed sin in his life? How do you feel, when there is unconfessed sin in your life? (Private reflection question: Are there things in your life right now that remain unconfessed?)

David feels distant from God. His bones are wasting away – he feels brittle. He is inwardly groaning. He feels the weight of God’s displeasure pressing down on him. He feels weak. He feels lifeless.

NB: David doesn’t doubt that God still loves him, but in the words of Psalm 51:12 he has lost the JOY of his salvation.

We often might feel a similar way when there is unconfessed sin in our life. Get people to really DIG into what they feel when there is unconfessed sin in their life. They may feel miserable. They may feel unable to read their Bibles. They may feel unable to pray. Etc...

Note: The private reflection question is not for sharing in the group.

- Q6.   Skim read through Psalm 51.

- a) In confessing his sin, what is David anticipating? See v1-2 ,v7-8, v10-15, for a whole range of things. Have you ever felt this way after confessing sin?

David in anticipating having his sins blotted out, being washed and cleansed, being made white again, feeling joy and gladness, feeling healed, having a clean heart, having a right spirit, an awareness of God's presence, an awareness of God's indwelling Spirit, joy in his salvation, a better ability to be an evangelist for the Lord, and a renewed vigour for praising God.

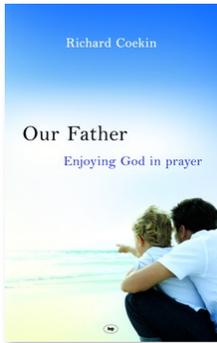
- b) What practical steps can you take to ensure that you regularly confess your sins to God?

By deliberately allocating a slot within your daily prayer time for confessing sin. By regularly giving thought to ways in which you have fallen short of His glory. By memorising the Lord's Prayer and using it as a framework for your prayers. etc.

Prayer Points:

Recommended Books

You may want to do some further reading to help you understand even better what the Bible says about prayer. Here are a few ideas. Some of these are also available from the Grace library in the foyer.



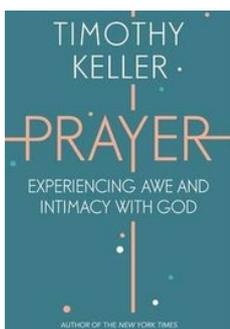
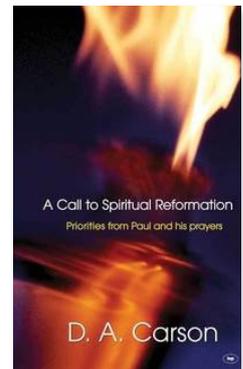
Our Father - Enjoying God in Prayer by *Richard Coekin* (© 2012 IVP)

'I was just thrilled with this book which gave me such a desire to pray a prayer which crystallises Christ's priorities for our lives.'

- Rico Tice (*Christianity Explored Ministries*)

A Call To Spiritual Reformation by *D.A Carson* (© 2011, IVP)

God doesn't demand hectic church programs and frenetic schedules: he only wants his people to know him more intimately, says D.A. Carson. The apostle Paul found that spiritual closeness in his own fellowship with the Father. *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* investigates the Epistles to see what lessons Paul taught in his 'school of prayer.'

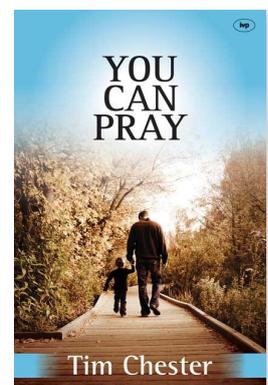


Prayer - Experiencing Awe and Intimacy With God by *Timothy Keller* (© 2014, Hodder & Staughton)

A very practical book on how to dismantle those idols and bring about deep and permanent changes in our character and behaviour. This is a book that will teach you to pray - and in doing so, will change your life.

You Can Pray by *Tim Chester*, (© 2014, IVP)

If you're easily distracted when praying, you're not alone. In fact, if you struggle to pray in the first place, that's not unusual either. Tim Chester tells us how we can be great pray-ers. And he admits that that's a really bold claim.



All of these books are available online from koorong.com, or bookdepository.com or from Koorong stores.

Mobile Apps to help you pray



PrayerMate - Helping you to pray faithfully & widely

Prayer is an amazing privilege, but it's also really hard work (the apostle Paul compares it to a wrestling match!) PrayerMate is a Christian prayer app that seeks to help you actually pray for all the people and causes you care about.

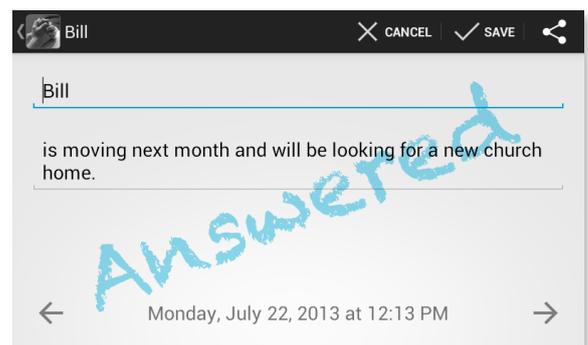
PrayerMate brings all your prayer points together. Whether its your personal prayer points for friends and family, regular updates from some fantastic mission organisations, or the latest PDF prayer letter that just arrived in your inbox, PrayerMate puts it all together in one place and helps you get on and pray.

Mobile Knee - Prayer List

Do you want to develop a better prayer life? Do you often "intend" to pray for someone or something but later forget? Do you wish you could have your prayer list with you at any time, to pray or add a request? This app was made for you!

Features:

- Maintain multiple prayer List
- Enter individual prayers
- Mark as answered
- View prayers (unanswered or all)
- Homescreen Widgets to cycle through each prayer during prayer time
- ...and many more!



Notes



Men's Breakfast 2014

When: 7.15am for 7.30am start, 22 November 2014

Where: Forest Sanctuary, 77 Owen Creek Road

Cost: \$25 per person / \$20 for students & pensioners
(incl. full English breakfast and morning tea)

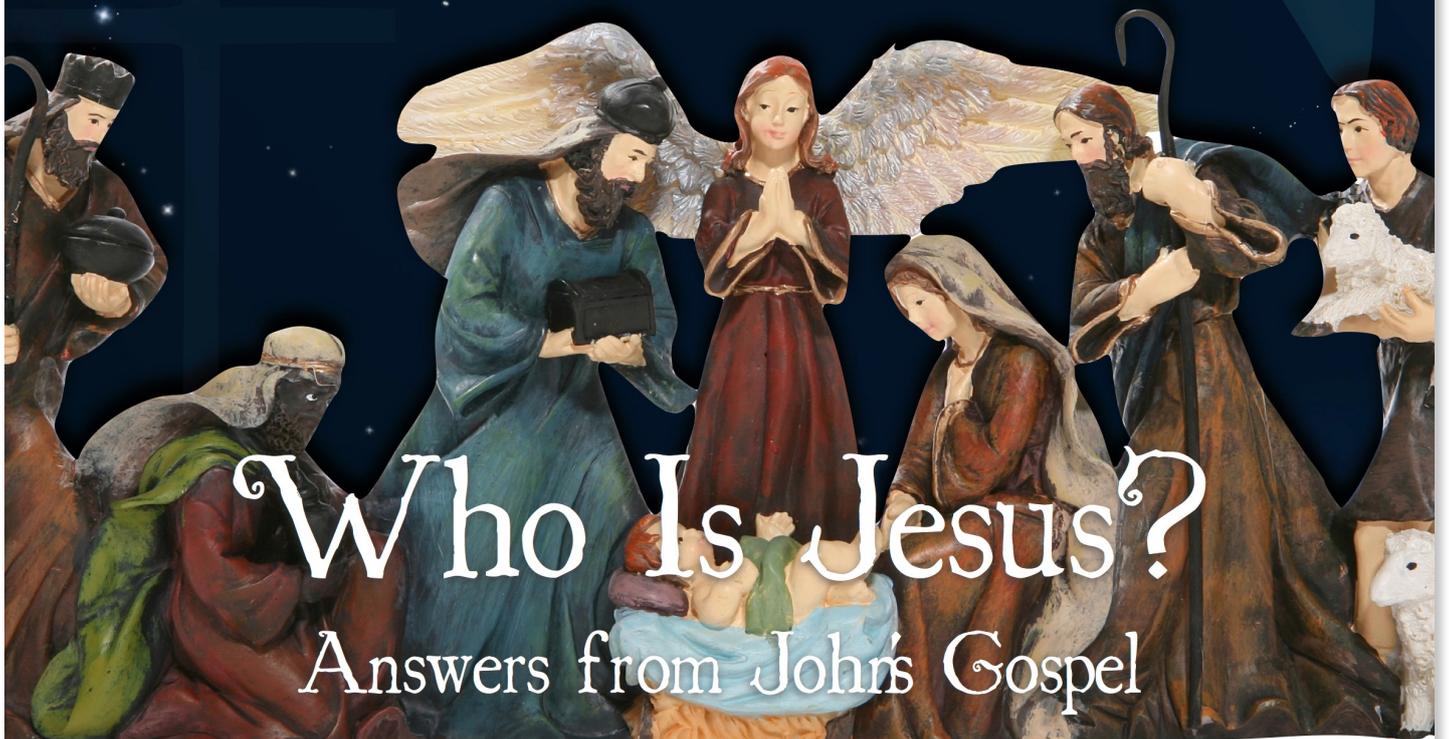
For more information and to register,
please contact (07) 5445 8933 or
menofgrace@gracechurchbuderim.com.au
(Registration closes Monday **17 Nov 2014**)

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Christmas @ Grace

7 - 28 December 2014



Services every Sunday at 7.45am, 9.30am & 6.00pm

Carol Service (21 Dec) at 6.00pm

Christmas Eve (24 Dec) at 6.00pm

Christmas Day Service at 9.00am

For more information, go to www.gracechurchbuderim.com.au,
or contact office@gracechurchbuderim.com.au or 07 5445 8933

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