

## **Prayer Principles & Practices - Increasing the Effectiveness of Our Prayer Life!**

Study Overview:

Study 1 – Best Examples of Effective Prayer (Christ & Holy Spirit)

Study 2 – Biblical Examples of Effective Prayer (Old & New Test.)

Study 3 – Barriers & Bridges to Effective Prayer

Study 4 – Book Reviews on Effective Prayer

### **Study 1. Best Examples of Effective Prayer (Christ & The Spirit)**

James 5:6 says, “The prayer of a righteous man is **powerful** and **effective.**”

#### **What About You?**

What questions does this verse prompt from you? (i.e. Who or what qualifies as a “righteous” man? Are my prayers effective? Can my prayers be God-empowered?)

What word(s) would you use to describe your current prayer life? Why did you select these words? (i.e. inconsistent, frustrating, fulfilling, growing, etc.)

In what way(s) do you want to see the effectiveness of your prayer life increased as a result of this study?

See Hebrews 4:15-16 for a promise to claim and a prayer to pray.

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to ***sympathize*** with our weaknesses...Let us then approach the throne of grace with ***confidence***, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

How encouraging it is to realize that Jesus **knows** what we are experiencing, he **understands** what we are feeling and he is **able** to help us in the midst of our struggles!

See also Hebrews 2:17-18

### **Learning From Christ’s Example of Effective Prayer**

Jesus is our **best** example of prayer which is effective and powerful because he is a **perfect** example of a righteous man and is God himself.

The disciples knew they **needed** and could **learn much** about prayer from Jesus.

They asked, “*Lord*, teach us to pray.” Luke 11:1

## **The Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1-10)**

What can we learn about effective prayer from Christ's example? Read the passage and answer the following questions on the Lord's prayer:

*Group 1.* What prompted the disciple's request (vs. 1) for Jesus to teach about prayer? What other examples of prayer did Jesus demonstrate to the disciples?

See Luke 5:15-16; 6:12, 9:18, 28; 18:1

(i.e. the disciples observed Jesus praying in a variety of occasions and wanted him to teach them as John the Baptist had taught his disciples)

*Group 2.* Why might this lesson on prayer be significant at this time? What sequence of events led up to and followed the Lord's prayer? See: Luke 9:44, 51; 10:1-3; and 11:14-20.

(i.e. Jesus knew his rejection, betrayal and death were forthcoming and he wanted the disciples to be empowered to carry on the Kingdom work without his physical presence. That is why he trained and prepared them to continue the ministry he started. They would now need to turn to and rely directly on God through prayer and His Spirit.)

*Group 3.* What does Jesus tell the disciples to do or say when they pray? List the areas below. How do these areas compare to various types of prayer noted in the ACTS acronym (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication)?

*Group 4.* Compare with Matthew 6:9-13. What differences or additions are found in Matthew's version of the Lord's prayer? Why do you think it happened?

vs. 9 - "Our" father (the Greek word *pater* refers to a respected ancestor, mentor, or model)

vs. 10 - "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (i.e. God's sovereignty)

vs. 12 - "debts...debtors" (sins were seen as a debt owed to God (i.e. the term describes an obligation requiring reparations))

vs. 13 - "but deliver us from the *evil one*" (*poneros* translated as wicked, malicious, or morally deficient). Certainly true of Satan.

The Lord's Prayer Teaches us That Prayer is...

- **Adoring** God! "Father, *hallowed* be your name..."
- **Agreeing with** God! "*your* kingdom come, *your* will be done on earth as it *is* in heaven."  
Matt. 6:10
- **Relying on** God! "*give us* each day our daily bread...and *lead us* not into *temptation...deliver us* from the evil one."
- **Responding to** God! "for we also forgive everyone who sins against us..."

## Jesus Believed in the Power of Prayer!

What promises and commands regarding the power of prayer are given by Christ in the following passages?

- Mark 11:22-24 – “**Have faith** in God, Jesus answered. I tell you the truth... Therefore...whatever you ask for in prayer, **believe** that you have received it and it will be yours.”
- Luke 11:9-10 – “**Ask** and it will be given to you: **seek** and you will find, **knock** and the door will be opened to us. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”
- John 16:23-24 – “I tell you the truth, my father will give you **whatever** you *ask in my name*. Until now you have not asked for anything **in my name**. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

### Searching Questions to Consider:

1. Do these passages mean that God gives us a blank check when it comes to prayer???

Actually, the answer is **Both Yes and No!**

**YES**, because...anyone can come to God with any request (i.e. “whatever you ask” (Mark 11:24), “everyone who asks” (Luke 11:10) and “whatever you ask...anything” (John 16:23-24).

**NO**, because...not every prayer will be answered with a yes. (i.e. “in my name” (John 16:24)

Praying in Christ’s name is much more than a **benediction**.

It is **agreeing** with God’s sovereign plans and purposes and praying for **His will** to be done on earth as it is in heaven and in our lives as well as in the lives of others.

2. What underlying truths can we draw from Jesus’ statements on prayer?

- God **EXPECTS** us to pray! Luke 11:2 says, “*When you pray...*” (not “If”)  
See: Matt. 6:5-9 (same phrase is used 4x’s)
- God **ENCOURAGES** us to come to him in prayer! (i.e. “*ask...seek...knock*”)  
See: Hebrew 10:22
- God **DELIGHTS** to answer our prayers! (i.e. “*your joy will be complete*”)  
See: Luke 11:13
- God **REQUIRES** us to pray according to His will (i.e. “*in my name*”)  
See: 1 John 5:14-15

Illus. Car wheel alignment needed to travel on correct path. God requires us to align our will and desires with His will and desires. See: Psalm 20:4 & 40:8

### Learning From The Spirit's Example of Effective Prayer:

Concerning prayer and the Spirit (of Christ, i.e. Rom. 8:9), what **promises** and/or **commands** are found in the following passages? Be sure to note for *whom* and for *what* the Spirit prays:

Romans 8:26-28, 34

For Whom? "The Spirit helps **us**...the Spirit intercedes for **us**...searches **our** hearts....the Spirit intercedes for the **saints**..." (vs. 26-27) "Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God interceding for **us**" (vs. 34)

For What? "helps us in our **weaknesses**...What we **ought** to pray for" (vs. 26) "in **accordance** with his will" (vs. 27)

Ephesians 6:18 – "Pray **in the Spirit** on **all** occasions with **all** kinds of prayers and requests."

What do you think it means to "pray in" the Spirit?

The phrase *en pneumati* means... to be in communion (i.e. closely aligned to or in accordance with) the Spirit or in the power of the Spirit.

Hebrews 7:25 – "Therefore, he is able to **save completely** those who **come to God** through him since he always lives to **intercede for them**."

The Greek word *intercedes* can also be translated as... *appeals or petitions*

See: Job 16:19-21

### Paul Also Believed in The Power of Prayer!

What do the following verses indicate about Paul's belief in the power of prayer?

- Philippians 1:19 – "I know that *through your prayers* and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance."
- 2 Corinthians 1:10-11 - "On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us *by your prayers*. Then many will give thanks...for the gracious favor granted us *in answer to the prayers of many*."
- Ephesians 6: 10-11 & 17-19 – "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes...Take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. And *pray...with all kinds of prayers...keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me*."

### **Making it Personal**

Finish the sentences below:

Because the Spirit of Christ prays and intercedes for me...

Because there is power in prayer...

## **Study 2 – Biblical Examples of Effective Prayer (Old & New Testament)**

Which person would you like to study? Read the assigned passage, complete the questions listed below and come prepared to share with others next week what you have learned.

- Abraham – Genesis 18:16-33
- Moses - Exodus 32:1-15
- David – Psalm 32:1-11
- Hannah – 1 Samuel 1:1-20
- Peter & John – Acts 4:5-31
- Paul – Ephesians 1:15-20; 3:14-19 & Colossians 1:9-12
- Nehemiah – Neh. 1:1-11
- Job – Job 40:1-5 & 42:1-9

**Prayer Study Questions:** Develop a short (5-10 min.) presentation answering the following:

1. What is the situation prompting this person's prayer?
2. What does he/she ask God for in this prayer? Why?
3. Share a few noteworthy excerpts from this person's prayer.
4. What was God's response to the prayer?
5. What is your reaction to this prayer?
6. What can we learn from this person's prayer about God, ourselves or others?
7. What principles or practices can we take from this person's prayer that can help us in our own prayer life?