



Part 2: Lesson 9

Cultivating the Good Soil: Prayer and You

Fertile Soil: Starting Your New Life with Jesus

Every devoted and loving relationship has one thing in common—**good communication**. Married couples who have committed their lives to one another make honest, intimate communication a priority. Many husbands and wives have developed their own familiar style of language. They can understand their partner's desires and needs by interpreting simple words or gestures. Loving parents tenderly talk to their children and listen as their children express their joys and concerns. Friends communicate for the pure pleasure of enjoying each other's company and to make life more fulfilling. Simple observation reveals the deeper the relationship, the more personal the communication.



God wants us to have intimate communication with Him. The language of communication with God is called **prayer**. Through prayer, we can reach out to God and express our deepest desires. In prayer, we can carefully listen and discover that God speaks to us.

As with **reading God's Word**, **prayer** is a lifelong spiritual discipline that is learned through daily practice. Prayer transforms us from the inside out and deepens our relationship with Christ.

YOUR GROWTH GOAL



GROWTH GOAL: In this lesson will study the spiritual discipline of prayer. You will learn:

- 1) About Jesus' prayer life
- 2) How Jesus taught His disciples to pray
- 3) How you can pray.



Before you go any further, stop and ask God to help you understand His Word, to help you experience His presence, and to become the person He wants you to be.

JESUS' PRAYER LIFE



The New Testament records several examples of Jesus' prayer life. Read the following Scriptures and make observations.

- ❖ *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed (Mark 1:35).*
- ❖ *One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. (Luke 6:12).*
- ❖ *Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone (Matthew 14:22-23).*
- ❖ *Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:16).*



When were the times that Jesus prayed?

Where were the places that Jesus prayed?

Why do you think Jesus went to quiet places?

Jesus prayed constantly. His times of prayer were not limited to a time of day or special location. He prayed whenever and wherever He needed to. It was essential. He prayed at all the important moments in His life and ministry. Before He started His ministry, He went into the desert for forty days of prayer and fasting. Jesus' most dramatic prayer is recorded just before He was arrested, tortured, and crucified on the cross. He knew that He had only a few hours to live.



They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. “Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

Returning the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!” (Mark 14:32-41).

What were the various emotions that Jesus was experiencing?

What did Jesus ask in His prayer?

DIGGING DEEPER: JESUS TEACHES US HOW TO PRAY



Jesus' disciples watched Him pray. They saw its importance in His life and ministry. They wanted to learn to pray like Him. *“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples’” (Luke 11:1).* In response to this request, Jesus provided a model for prayer, sometimes called the Lord’s Prayer.

This, then, is how you should pray:

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today 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 the evil one (Matthew 6:9-13).*

There are different expressions in the Lord’s Prayer. **How does this prayer:**

- Praise God? _____
- Submit to God? _____
- Confess to God? _____
- Ask God? _____

There are two parts to the Lord’s Prayer. **First, it begins with God. It acknowledges that He is God, and we are not.** When we recognize the supremacy of God, we submit our lives to Him.

Jesus begins with *“Our Father in heaven.”*

If God is our Father, what does that say about your relationship with God?

Knowing that God is your Father, and you are His child, how does that help you when you pray?

Then Jesus prayed, *“hallowed be your name.”* “Hallowed” means “holy.” It means that God is different from us in His character. This is an expression of worship and praise.



Next, Jesus teaches us to pray, “*your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*”

What do these three expressions mean?

What do they teach you about your relationship with God?

In your prayers, what kind of attitude do you need to have when approaching God?



In the second part of the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus expresses three personal concerns. These are called prayers of petition and intercession.

Give us today our daily bread.

What does this simple prayer mean to you?

If you know that God cares about your daily needs and that you can ask Him for your personal needs, what does that do for your confidence when you pray to God?

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Why is this important to pray?

How do prayer and forgiveness go together?

What does this prayer say about our relationships with others?

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Besides our physical struggles, God is concerned about our spiritual struggles. What do these petitions tell us about life?

How can you ask God to help you when you pray?

JESUS' INSTRUCTIONS ON PRAYER

Also, Jesus gave instructions on how to pray. Study these verses and apply them to your prayer life.

I. PRAY IN PRIVATE AND WITH HONESTY

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matthew 6:5-8).

What are the things that Jesus tells you to avoid when you pray?

If God knows what you need before you ask, how will that help you when you pray?

2. PRAY WITH CONFIDENCE

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:7-11).

What does God promise when you pray?

What does Jesus mean when He says that God will not give you a stone when you ask for bread?

What does Jesus mean when He says that God will not give you a snake when you ask for a fish?

How does this help your confidence when you pray?

3. PRAY CONTINUALLY

Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need” (Luke 11:5-8).

What does this story teach you about prayer?

4. PRAY WITH HUMILITY

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14).

How would you describe the difference between the two men who prayed?

Have you ever felt like the second man who prayed and found it difficult to express in words what you want to say?

Why was the second man justified before God?

5. PRAY WITH FAITH

“Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:23-25).

What are the conditions for effective prayer?

GROWING INWARD: LEARNING TO PRAY



Prayer is the expression of your heart longing for God's love, and God knows your heart.

Prayer is life-changing. Prayer is how you connect with our Heavenly Father. Nothing draws you closer to the heart of God and nothing releases His power in your life more than living a life of prayer.

Prayer is a great gift from God because it reminds you that He is always present and that He always loves you. You can approach God with confidence because He promises to listen and to answer your prayers.

Again, beginning a new habit takes patience and practice. These are some practical suggestions to help you pray.

I. PREPARING TO PRAY

- ❖ **Prepare to Meet with God-** as you prepare to pray, start with the awareness that you are meeting with God. You are in God's presence, and He will listen to you. You have an audience with our heavenly Father.
- ❖ **Find a Place-** remember, Jesus withdrew to solitary, lonely places to be alone for prayer. He wanted nothing to distract Him from intimacy with His heavenly Father. Go to a place where you can create the greatest focus and intimacy with God. A quiet place will help to quiet your heart and mind.
- ❖ **Make Time-** Jesus prayed morning and night and whenever He needed to. You can set aside a special time for prayer to help you form a habit, but you are not limited to any one time.

2. PRAY THE PRAYER JESUS TAUGHT US



Slowly pray the Lord's Prayer. Think about what the words mean in your relationship with God, your life, and your relationship with others.

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today 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 the evil one.*

The Lord's Prayer expresses praise, submission to His will, confession of our sins, personal petitions, and intercessions for others. How can you make the same expressions in your own words? Take some time to write these in your own words:

<p>Your praises</p> <p>Your submission to His will</p> <p>Your confession</p> <p>Your personal needs</p> <p>The needs of others</p>
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Now, pray in your own words what you need to express to God.

With your mentor and other followers, pray together, asking God to guide your steps, to strengthen and protect you, and to provide for your daily needs.

Every day this week, make time for private prayer. Pray the Lord's Prayer in your own words.

