

Lesson 8

PRAYER AND THE BELIEVER

Prepare for Your Assignment

1. Download message #8, "Praying Unceasingly," from www.gty.org/fof.
2. Use your notebook to take notes on the message.
3. Work through the questions and tasks on the following pages.

Memorize Philippians 4:6-7

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The purpose of prayer is to express our submission to the sovereignty of God and our trust in His faithfulness. Prayer is the means by which we express all that is in our hearts to our loving and wise heavenly Father. Prayer is not to give God information, because God knows everything. Prayer brings us into reverent communion with God, worshiping Him and acknowledging Him as the giver of all things.

I. The Nature of Prayer

A. For the believer, prayer is a learning experience that must be developed into a spiritual discipline.

1. In Luke 11:1, what did the disciples ask of Jesus? _____

_____ "Teach us to pray." _____

2. Read Romans 8:26.

a. According to the apostle Paul, who assists us in our prayers? The Holy Spirit: "we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words."

b. In light of that, what should we do when we are not sure what to pray for? Pray and express our uncertainty to God and trust the Spirit to intercede for us.

B. Prayer is communication with God. Scripture tells us that God is very interested in our personal struggles.

1. What does Psalm 34:15 say about the Lord? His eyes are "toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry."

2. What did David bring before God in prayer (Psalm 142:2)? his complaints; his troubles

3. How are we encouraged to approach God (Hebrews 4:16)? “Let us draw near *with confidence* to the throne of grace.”

4. Though we have the privilege of access, what caution does Ecclesiastes 5:2 advise? “Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought” to; “let your words be few.”

5. What comfort does 1 Peter 5:6–7 offer believers? “casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”

C. Prayer is effective. It can change situations—and people. We are encouraged to pray expecting results.

1. For whom did the church pray in Acts 12:5? Peter, who was in prison

2. How did God answer their prayers (Acts 12:7)? “An angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter’s side and woke him up saying, ‘Get up quickly.’ And his chains fell off his hands.”

3. Besides answers, what else does God grant to those who pray (Philippians 4:6–7)? “the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension.”

“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” —James 5:16

II. The Practice of Prayer

A. Throughout the Bible, God encourages and commands believers to persevere in prayer.

1. In Luke 18:1, the disciples were taught that they should always pray and not lose heart.

2. What is God’s will for believers in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:17)?
They should pray without ceasing.

3. When should believers pray (Ephesians 6:18)? at all times

B. In the Bible, you will discover many guidelines to help you develop the practice of prayer.

1. In this parable in Luke 11, what did Jesus teach His disciples to expect if they persisted in prayer (Luke 11:5–10)? “Everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.” (that their prayers would be answered.)

■ We can start to understand praying without ceasing by looking at the life of our Lord Himself since He did that. He was obviously in constant communion with the Father. And we see Him in Scripture rising up early to pray. We see Him spending all night in prayer. It must have been an unending and nonstop communion between Himself and the Father. Hebrews tells us that He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. That is a fascinating insight. There was an intensity in the prayers of Jesus that is utterly unique, that is utterly amazing. When He prayed on a number of occasions, there was a great agonizing. And we can assume that even though the Scripture does not chronicle for us all the details of all of His praying, it had much of the same kind of intensity as those prayers that we do see and have revealed to us in the text. When the Bible tells us that He went to the Mount of Olives and prayed all night, there was no doubt an intensity in that kind of praying that we know very little about, if anything.

John MacArthur

2. What does Jesus teach as a requirement for answered prayer (John 15:7)?

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

3. According to 1 John 5:14, what is our confidence as we pray?

“if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

Jesus’ Pattern for Prayer: Matthew 6:9–13

Pray to God.....	Our Father who is in heaven
Exalt Him, saying.....	Hallowed be Your name
Submit to Him, praying.....	Your kingdom come, Your will be done
Look to Him, seeking.....	Our daily bread (sustenance)
Confess to Him, pleading.....	Forgive us our debts (sins)
Depend on Him, asking.....	Do not lead us into temptation
Trust in Him, requesting.....	Deliver us from evil

C. Look up the following verses and list some of the hindrances to answered prayer.

1. Psalm 66:18 "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear."
2. James 4:3 "You ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."
3. Isaiah 59:1-2 "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear."

Four Important Areas of Prayer	
Adoration.....	Reflect on God Himself. Praise Him for His attributes, His majesty, and His gift of Christ.
Confession	Admit to God that you have sinned. Be honest and humble. Remember, He knows you and loves you.
Thanksgiving.....	Tell God how grateful you are for everything He has given you, even the unpleasant things. Your thankfulness will help you see His purposes.
Supplication	Make specific requests. Pray first for others and then for yourself.
Notice that the first letters of these four words form the word "ACTS." You can use this acronym as a guide to maintain balance as you pray.	

III. The Struggle of Prayer

A. Prayer can be hard work, but that should not keep us from praying, even when it requires sacrifice.

1. How long did Jesus pray before He selected the 12 apostles (Luke 6:12)?
He spent the whole night in prayer.
2. Describe the intensity of Jesus as He prayed in anticipation of the cross (Luke 22:44).
"Being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground."
3. What should believers be careful to do when we devote ourselves to prayer (Colossians 4:2)?
Keep alert; have an attitude of thanksgiving.

B. Even when we are frustrated or discouraged, we can still approach God in prayer.

1. Why was David discouraged in Psalm 13:1-2? He thought God had forgotten him.

2. What was David's complaint in Psalm 22:2? "O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; and by night, but I have no rest." (David thought God had forsaken him.)

C. Prayer is governed by God's sovereignty, and His purpose determines His answer to our prayers.

1. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-9.

a. What did Paul pray for? that God would remove his "thorn in the flesh"

b. How many times did he pray for it? three

c. Did he receive what he asked for? Why or why not? No. God said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."

2. Read Mark 14:35-36.

a. What did Jesus ask of the Father concerning His "hour" of suffering?
That God would "remove this cup" from Him

b. But what was He willing to do? His Father's will

IV. Application

Compose a simple prayer, following the ACTS model on page 62.

(Answers will vary)

Surrender your requests to God's wise and loving plan, acknowledging your willingness to receive His answer with thankfulness.
