

# Bible Study on Prayer *4 lessons with questions*

This Bible study on prayer has four lessons, each built on one passage: how Jesus taught His disciples to pray in Matthew 6, His call to keep asking in Luke 11, Paul's answer to worry in Philippians 4, and the way Paul prayed for the believers in Colossae. It works for a small group, a Sunday class, a couple or one person with a notebook.

Each lesson prints the whole passage from the Berean Standard Bible, gives the big idea in one sentence, a few notes for the leader, questions to observe, understand and apply, a memory verse and a prayer to close. Tick off each lesson as you go, write your answers on the page, or print a lesson as a handout.

*One day in a place where Jesus had just finished praying, one of His disciples requested, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”*

– Luke 11:1 (BSB)

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## LESSON 1 OF 4

### How Jesus taught us to pray

Read Matthew 6:5-15

**The big idea:** Jesus teaches us to pray to a Father who already knows our needs: simply, without a show, and with His name, kingdom and will first.

#### Read

<sup>5</sup> 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 men. Truly I tell you, they already have their full reward. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your inner room, shut

your door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. <sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not babble on like pagans, for they think that by their many words they will be heard. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. <sup>9</sup> So then, this is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ <sup>14</sup> For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours.

– Matthew 6:5-15 (BSB)

## Notes

Jesus warns against two wrong ways to pray. Some pray to be seen by people, and they get exactly what they wanted: an audience. Others pile up words, as if God had to be worn down. Both miss the same truth: we pray to “your Father, who is unseen,” and He “knows what you need before you ask Him.”

Then Jesus gives a pattern. The first half is about God: His name honored, His kingdom come, His will done. The second half brings our needs: daily bread, forgiveness, and protection from temptation and the evil one. Jesus underlines one line in verses 14–15: forgiveness received from God and forgiveness given to others belong together.

## Questions

**OBSERVE** What does the passage say?

1. What two wrong ways of praying does Jesus describe in verses 5–8?
2. What does Jesus say the Father already knows (v. 8)?
3. List the requests in verses 9–13. Which are about God, and which are about us?

**UNDERSTAND** What does it mean?

1. Why do you think Jesus tells us to pray in an inner room with the door shut?
2. If the Father knows what we need before we ask, why pray at all?
3. What does 'Your will be done' ask God to do, and what does it ask of us?

**APPLY** What will I do with it?

1. Which part of this prayer do you most often leave out? Pray it every day this week.
2. Is there someone you need to forgive before you pray 'forgive us our debts'?
3. Choose a time and a place for your own 'inner room' this week.

## Memory verse

*But when you pray, go into your inner room, shut your door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

– Matthew 6:6 (BSB)

## Pray

*Our Father in heaven, thank You that I can come to You without putting on a show and without piling up words. You know what I need before I ask. Let Your name be honored in my life, and Your kingdom come and Your will be done in me today. Amen.*

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LESSON 2 OF 4

# Keep asking

Read Luke 11:5-13

**The big idea:** Jesus invites us to keep asking, seeking and knocking, because our Father in heaven is far better than the best earthly father.

## Read

<sup>5</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose one of you goes to his friend at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, <sup>6</sup> because a friend of mine has come to me on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him.’ <sup>7</sup> And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Do not bother me. My door is already shut, and my children and I are in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.’ <sup>8</sup> I tell you, even though he will not get up to provide for him because of his friendship, yet because of the man’s persistence, he will get up and give him as much as he needs. <sup>9</sup> So I tell you: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>11</sup> What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup> Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> So if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

– Luke 11:5-13 (BSB)

## Notes

Jesus tells a story about a man who knocks on a friend’s door at midnight. The friend inside does not want to get up, but he does, because the man will not stop asking. The point is not that God is a reluctant neighbor. It is the contrast: if persistence moves a tired friend, how much more will our Father hear His children.

The three words build: ask, seek, knock. Then Jesus turns from the neighbor to a father. No father hands his son a snake instead of a fish. Our Father is better than any of us, and the gift Jesus names is the Holy Spirit (v. 13). God answers as a good Father, which sometimes means not what we asked for, but never something evil.

## Questions

**OBSERVE** What does the passage say?

1. What does the man ask his friend for, and why does he need it (vv. 5–6)?
2. Why does the friend finally get up (v. 8)?
3. What gift does Jesus say the Father will give to those who ask Him (v. 13)?

**UNDERSTAND** What does it mean?

1. Is Jesus saying God is like the sleepy friend, or unlike him? How can you tell?
2. What is the difference between asking, seeking and knocking?
3. Why might the Holy Spirit be the best answer to our prayers?

**APPLY** What will I do with it?

1. What have you stopped asking God for? Will you start asking again?
2. When the answer seems to be ‘not this’, how can verses 11–13 help you keep trusting Him?
3. Who could you pray for, persistently, every day this month?

## Memory verse

*So I tell you: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.*

– Luke 11:9 (BSB)

## Pray

*Father, thank You that You are better than the best father on earth. Teach me to keep asking, seeking and knocking, and not to give up. I trust You to give good gifts, and above all I ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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LESSON 3 OF 4

# Pray instead of worrying

Read Philippians 4:4-9

**The big idea:** Paul tells us to turn every worry into prayer, with thanksgiving, and promises that God's peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ.

## Read

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be apparent to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think on these things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

— Philippians 4:4-9 (BSB)

## Notes

Paul wrote this letter from prison (Philippians 1:13), yet it is full of joy. Here he gives a short way to live: rejoice in the Lord, let your gentleness be seen, and remember that “The Lord is near.” Then comes the instruction many Christians know by heart: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Notice what Paul promises and what he does not. He does not promise that every request will be granted. He promises peace: “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your

minds in Christ Jesus.” Then he tells us where to point our thoughts (v. 8) and to put into practice what we have learned (v. 9).

## Questions

**OBSERVE** What does the passage say?

1. What does Paul tell us to do instead of being anxious (v. 6)?
2. What two things will God’s peace guard (v. 7)?
3. List the things Paul tells us to think on in verse 8.

**UNDERSTAND** What does it mean?

1. Why do you think Paul adds ‘with thanksgiving’ to prayer and petition?
2. What does it mean that God’s peace ‘surpasses all understanding’?
3. How are what we think about (v. 8) and the peace of God (vv. 7, 9) connected?

**APPLY** What will I do with it?

1. Write down one worry and turn it into a request to God, with thanks for something He has done.
2. Which thought keeps pulling you down? Which of the things in verse 8 could replace it?
3. Where do you need to practice, not just know, what you have learned (v. 9)?

## Memory verse

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

– Philippians 4:6-7 (BSB)

## Pray

*Lord, You are near. I bring You what I am anxious about today, and I thank You for all You have already done. Guard my heart and my mind with Your peace in Christ Jesus, and turn my thoughts to what is true, right and lovely. Amen.*

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LESSON 4 OF 4

## Praying for others

Read Colossians 1:9-14

**The big idea:** Paul shows us how to pray for others: for the knowledge of God's will, a life that pleases Him, strength to endure, and joyful thanks.

## Read

<sup>9</sup> For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have full endurance and patience, and joyfully <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. <sup>13</sup> He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

– Colossians 1:9-14 (BSB)

## Notes

Paul had heard about the believers in Colossae from Epaphras (1:7-8), and from that day he did not stop praying for them. He did not mainly ask for an easier life for them. He asked God to fill them with the knowledge of His will, so that they would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

Follow the chain: bearing fruit, growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened for endurance and patience, giving thanks with joy. And the reason for thanks is what God has already done: rescued us from darkness, brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, and given us redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Paul's requests are big ones, and ours can be too.

## Questions

**OBSERVE** What does the passage say?

1. When did Paul start praying for these believers, and how often did he pray (v. 9)?
2. What does Paul ask God to fill them with (v. 9)?
3. What has the Father already done for them (vv. 12–14)?

**UNDERSTAND** What does it mean?

1. Why might Paul pray for knowledge of God's will before he prays for strength?
2. What does it look like to 'walk in a manner worthy of the Lord' (v. 10)?
3. How does remembering what God has done (vv. 13–14) shape the way we pray for others?

**APPLY** What will I do with it?

1. Choose two people and pray verses 9–12 for them by name every day this week.
2. How do your prayers for others compare with Paul's? What would you add?
3. Who could you tell this week that you are praying for them?

## Memory verse

*He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

– Colossians 1:13-14 (BSB)

## Pray

*Father, thank You for rescuing us from the dominion of darkness and bringing us into the kingdom of Your beloved Son. I pray for the people I love: fill them with the knowledge of Your will, strengthen them with Your power, and give them endurance and joyful thanks. Amen.*

## Tips for leading this study

**Open with a minute of quiet.** Before reading, give the group sixty seconds of silence to settle. It is a study on prayer; let it start with prayer.

**Read the passage aloud twice.** Once to hear it, once slowly to notice details. Different readers help.

**Let silence do its work.** After a question, wait. The best answers often come after ten quiet seconds.

**Keep a group prayer list.** End each lesson by writing down requests, and begin the next by asking how God answered.

**Pray short prayers together.** Invite everyone to pray one sentence. Short prayers help the shy to start.

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## Questions