STARTING OUT AS A CHRISTIAN · STUDY NOTES

Study 8: The privilege of prayer

For personal study or groups

Your name

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How to use these notes. Watch each part's video on biblehelp.net, or read the text below. Look up each passage in your own Bible and write the answer on the lines. The verses are printed at the back if you need them. At the end there are questions to think about on your own or to discuss in a group.

PART 1

Talking with our Father

An immense privilege

Prayer is an immense privilege, and yet even the youngest Christian has the right to pray. It is an astonishing fact that God invites us to speak with Him, and that He works powerfully as a result of our prayers. It has been said: "Not to pray is to be guilty of the incredible folly of ignoring the possibility of adding God to our resources." Supernatural strength can only come from a supernatural source.

1. Prayer is a sign of life

The first sign of life in a new-born child is its cry. The first sign of spiritual life in a new-born Christian is the cry "Abba, Father". As an adopted member of God's family, and with the help of God's Spirit, he can speak to God as his Father.

1 **Look up Romans 8:15**

What do we cry, by the Spirit of adoption?

So prayer is an expression of our relationship with God. Through prayer we become more deeply aware of God's fatherly love.

2 **Look up Matthew 7:11**

What will our Father in heaven give to those who ask Him?

Prayer comes naturally to a new Christian. The first thing we learn about Saul of Tarsus after his conversion is that he was praying! (Acts 9:11)

2. Praying in private

Private prayer is vital to our spiritual growth. We all need time alone with God.

3 **Look up Matthew 6:6**

Where does Jesus tell us to pray, and who sees us there?

Being alone in prayer was a notable feature of Jesus' own life.

4 **Look up Mark 1:35**

When and where did Jesus pray?

Sometimes, in a public place, it isn't possible to go away and pray, and yet we may urgently need God's help. At times like that we can reach God in silent prayer, like Nehemiah when he had a special request to make of a king. God hears and answers our short, specific prayers just as He does all our prayers.

5 **Read Nehemiah 2:4–5**

What did Nehemiah do before he answered the king?

3. Praying with others

Praying with others at church gatherings or in home prayer groups is a great encouragement to Christians. But it is also a means of great spiritual power. The united prayer of the early church came before the outpouring of God's Spirit at Pentecost and the conversion of many. Prayer is the powerhouse of the church.

6 **Look up Acts 1:14**

How did they all pray?

See also: Acts 2:1–2 and 2:41–42.

Praying aloud with others is an ordeal for some people, but it needn't be. Pray to God as you would speak to a friend, while remembering who He is. If the whole idea fills you with terror, don't despair! You can still go to prayer meetings and pray silently; God will hear you just the same.

PART 2

What to pray

4. What we pray about

We should bring the whole of life to God in prayer, just as small children talk to their parents about everything.

The prayer Jesus taught (Matthew 6:9–13; compare Luke 11:2–4) is a great help:

- "Our Father in heaven" reminds us of our relationship with God;
- "hallowed be Your name" is a prayer for God's honour and glory;
- "Your kingdom come, Your will be done" is a prayer for God's work;
- "Give us this day our daily bread" is a prayer for our daily needs;
- "forgive us our debts" is a prayer confessing our sins;
- "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" is a prayer for help against Satan.

Notice how the Lord's "model prayer" is arranged: God's concerns come first, then ours.

7 **Read Matthew 6:9–13**

What do we pray for first?

Another approach can be summed up by the letters **A.C.T.S.**

Adoration: when we pray, we should remember who God is, and bring Him our worship and adoration.

8 **Look up Revelation 4:11**

Why is God worthy to receive glory and honour and power?

See also: 1 Chronicles 29:10–11.

Confession: sin spoils our relationship with God. We should admit our faults and ask for God's forgiveness, and His help to do better.

9 **Look up 1 John 1:9**

Which two words describe God when He forgives the sins we confess?

See also: Psalm 51:10.

Thanksgiving: we should remember God's kindness and thank Him for all He has done for us.

10 **Look up Psalm 103:2**

What are we not to forget?

Supplication: an old-fashioned word for prayers of asking, for ourselves and for others. Both are needed.

11 **Look up Ephesians 6:18**

When should we pray, and for whom?

See also: Philippians 4:6.

5. Finally

Ask for things that please God. Prayer is not a blank cheque. In His wisdom and love, God will sometimes say "no" to our requests, as any sensible parent must. But if we ask according to His will, we shall receive it.

12 **Look up 1 John 5:14**

When can we be confident that God hears us?

Perhaps the most important thing in prayer is sincerity. God knows our hearts, so there is no point in pretending to be what we are not, or in using words we don't really mean. Beware of putting on a performance (Matthew 6:5–8).

Prayer takes effort. It is a discipline to be learned, not a technique to be mastered. It is consciously living in God's presence, and bringing everything to Him as a matter of course.

13 **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18**

How often should we pray?

Learning to pray

The best way to learn to pray is – to pray!

THINK IT THROUGH

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What does it mean to you that you can call God "Father"?

2. When could you set aside time each day to pray alone?

3. Try praying through A.C.T.S. this week. Which part do you find hardest?

HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART

Memory verse for study 8

Learn this verse by heart this week. Cut out the card and keep it where you will see it.

STARTING OUT AS A CHRISTIAN · STUDY 8 · MEMORY VERSE

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Philippians 4:6

Berean Standard Bible · biblehelp.net

“I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11, BSB)

AT THE BACK

The Bible passages (BSB)

1 **Romans 8:15** *For you did not receive a spirit of slavery that returns you to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption to sonship, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

2 **Matthew 7:11** *So if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*

3 **Matthew 6:6** *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.*

4 **Mark 1:35** *Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up and went out to a solitary place to pray.*

5 **Nehemiah 2:4–5** *4"What is your request?" replied the king. So I prayed to the God of heaven 5and answered the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city where my fathers are buried, so that I may rebuild it."*

6 **Acts 1:14** *With one accord they all continued in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

7 **Matthew 6:9–13** *9So then, this is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. 10Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11Give us this day our daily bread. 12And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'*

8 **Revelation 4:11** *"Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things; by Your will they exist and were created."*

9 **1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

10 **Psalm 103:2** *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all His kind deeds—*

11 **Ephesians 6:18** *Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition. To this end, stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints.*

12 **1 John 5:14** *And this is the confidence that we have before Him: If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*

13 **1 Thessalonians 5:16–18** *16Rejoice at all times. 17Pray without ceasing. 18Give thanks in every circumstance, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain. Quotations keep its American spelling. Like many English Bibles, it often says 'man', 'he' or 'brothers' where it means people in general, men and women alike.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Study 8: The privilege of prayer

> **Memory verse:** “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” (Philippians 4:6). Say it together at the end, and ask who can say it without looking.

Aims

- Show that prayer is a privilege and a sign of new life: speaking to God as Father.
- Encourage private prayer, quick silent prayer and praying with others.
- Teach two patterns: the Lord's Prayer and A.C.T.S.

Suggested timing (about 60 minutes)

- **5 min** Welcome and short prayer.
- **20 min** Part 1 video (5 min); Romans 8:15, Matthew 7:11, 6:6, Mark 1:35, Nehemiah 2:4–5 and Acts 1:14.
- **25 min** Part 2 video (5 min); Matthew 6:9–13, Revelation 4:11, 1 John 1:9, Psalm 103:2, Ephesians 6:18, 1 John 5:14 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18.
- **10 min** Pray together briefly using A.C.T.S.; no one should feel pressed to pray aloud.

Tips

- Many new believers are nervous of praying aloud. Model short, simple prayers and reassure them that silent prayer is welcome.
- God sometimes says "no" or "wait"; that is His wisdom and love, not indifference.
- Suggest a simple prayer list for the week.

Answers to watch for

- **Romans 8:15:** by the Spirit we cry, "Abba, Father."
- **Matthew 7:11:** how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him.
- **Matthew 6:6:** go into your inner room, shut your door, and pray to your Father.
- **Mark 1:35:** early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus went out to a solitary place to pray.
- **Nehemiah 2:4–5:** Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven, then answered the king.
- **Acts 1:14:** with one accord they all continued in prayer.
- **Matthew 6:9–13:** the Lord's Prayer; God's concerns first, then ours.
- **Revelation 4:11:** "Worthy are You, our Lord and God..."
- **1 John 1:9:** if we confess our sins, He will forgive us.
- **Psalm 103:2:** do not forget all His kind deeds.
- **Ephesians 6:18:** pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition.
- **1 John 5:14:** if we ask according to His will, He hears us.
- **1 Thessalonians 5:16–18:** rejoice at all times, pray without ceasing, give thanks in every circumstance.