

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

STOP

LISTEN

PRAY



Jesus changes everything

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

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JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Bible, believers are called to pray. Prayer is not a mysterious practice reserved only for pastors and the religiously devout. Prayer is simply communicating with God—listening and talking to Him. Believers can pray from the heart, freely, spontaneously, and in their own words. God has established prayer as the means by which we receive His supernatural help. Everything that distinguishes Christians from the world in a Christ-exalting way is a work of God's supernatural grace. And God has ordained that this grace flows to us through prayer.

Despite the great emphasis the Bible places on prayer, prayer still has a poor image. Some people dismiss prayer as a weak alternative to practical action; an excuse to do nothing. Offering to pray for someone is often nothing but a graceful way to excuse ourselves from an awkward situation. We see it as an exit line. Some people see prayer as something the more delicate people engage in, while the others are out there, doing the job.

However, prayer is action. Prayer is not a substitute for work, or preparation for work. It *is* work. It is not just a religious exercise, it is a human necessity.

In his book, *Don't just stand there, pray something!* Ronald Dunn says God has always sought people to stand in the gap before Him, on behalf of other. Ezekiel 22:30 says: *"I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land, so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one."*

Jesus changes everything when He becomes your Saviour. He also changes the way you pray. May this study help you to have such faith, that you can stand in the gap for others.

Soli Deo Gloria!
To God alone all the glory!

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Week 1

Jesus changes the way we pray

Memory verse:

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV)



Jesus changes everything

Day 1:

Jesus did nothing unless He spoke to His Father

Begin today's study with prayer.

If we look at Jesus as a human being, one can surely say that He was the one who needed prayer the least. Yet we always read about Jesus' prayer life; He brought everything to His Father in prayer. He never took any action without praying about it first. Jesus's prayer life made His disciples jealous. They also wanted to pray. At one point they came to Him and asked Him: "Lord, teach us to pray."

If you are serious about growing spiritually this year, you should ask God to change your prayer life. You would not find a better example to follow than the example of Jesus.

Jesus did nothing before speaking to His Father first.

Read Luke 3:21-22

What do you think Jesus asked His Father?

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What was Father’s reaction to Jesus’ prayer?

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Although Jesus Himself is God, He chose to obey His Father by being baptized. After His baptism He prayed and I believe He asked Father to equip Him with God's power so that He could do His work. Father then answered by filling Him with His Spirit.

Nothing in your life will change if you do not live in total dependency on God through His Holy Spirit.

Jesus' ministry did not begin before He was equipped by the Holy Spirit. His promise to His disciples and to us was that He would equip us with His Holy Spirit, and this He did by endowing us with the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 1:8 and Ephesians 5:18-20

Ask God daily to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Allow Him to take control and follow Him in obedience.

End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 2:

Jesus prayed before making decisions

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Read Luke 6:12-13

Jesus' ministry began to gain momentum and therefore He had to get men who would be willing to walk with Him. One might think that He knew who He wanted. Yet, we read that He spent the whole night praying.

Why do you think He prayed?

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Read Acts 1:23-25

How many times have you made important decisions without first talking to God, only to find that it was a mistake?

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It happens in all our lives. Or sometimes, we decide on a matter and then we only pray to ask the Lord to bless it.

God will bless the things He wants us to do, we do not have to ask Him to bless it.

We need to learn to pray for everything, by speaking to the Father.

Jesus teaches us that He consulted God about the ministry and what God desired. We have to consult with the Lord constantly about His strategy in the church and our ministries especially.

Let's ask Jesus to change our way of thinking, because we don't live in compartments. Our whole life should be dedicated to God.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

Day 3:
**Jesus prayed when He was
under pressure**

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Read Luke 5:12-16

What do you do when you experience pressure?

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It was a busy day for Jesus. A crowd of people gathered and everyone wanted of His time and attention. What did Jesus do? Verse 16 says, "He always set Him apart to pray." When Jesus was under pressure, He always sought His rest in His Father's presence. Jesus knew that He had to spend more time with the Lord than doing the things of the Lord.

Read Philippians 4:6-7

What does Paul say we should do when we are anxious or worried?

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Prayer is the antidote to worry. Because the Lord is close to us, we can pray!

What will happen if you pray and present your worries and anxious feelings to Him?

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We all are busy sometimes. The more pressure, the less time we use to organize our time and of course to pray. This leads to more pressure and eventually collapse. Jesus comes to teach us differently. He regularly spent time with His Father. That is why God invites us to come to Him.

According to Philippians 4, if the worries become too much to bear, make it known to God with prayer and thanksgiving, sometimes accompanied by pleading. The promise of God is not that the pressure will go away, but that He will give peace. This peace comes from God. It is the secure confidence of His love. It brings the knowledge and satisfaction that God is in charge and that He will relieve pressure.

End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 4:

Jesus prayed for the spreading of the Gospel

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Read Mark.1:35-38

In the passage just prior to this passage we saw that Jesus healed many people. Everyone, even the disciples, was swept up in the excitement of the miracles. What did Jesus do? What were His priorities?

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Sometimes Jesus prayed throughout the night; sometimes it was late in the evening when the crowds dispersed. We also read that He prayed early in the morning. It is proof that Jesus was very serious about His prayer life. It is therefore no wonder the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray.

In the same way we should pray for the spreading of the Gospel.

Read Matthew 9:37-38

Why do you think it is necessary to pray for more workers? Doesn't God know?

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Jesus invites us to pray more and more for workers to be send. Jesus will change your mind when you start praying for more workers. He may also convince you that you are one of His workers. Everyone serving the Lord is part of the expansion of the Kingdom.

Pray that the Lord will also show you where He can use you. Then be available.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 5:

God always answers. Yes or No.

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Many people say, "Why should I pray? God knows what goes on in my heart." Here is an example of prayer despite God knowing what is in your heart: Jesus knew what was in God's heart, yet He prayed.

Read John 11:33-44

Jesus got the message that Lazarus was sick and that He had to come urgently. When He eventually arrived, Lazarus was already dead. Even though He knew Lazarus was going to die, He wept. He had compassion with the people who were in pain. Jesus cries with you if you are sad, although He knows what the outcome will be.

Jesus prayed, even though He knew what the will of the Father will be.

Read 1 John 5:14-15

What do you learn from these verses?

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Would it not be wonderful if all prayers were answered positively? Well, there is a possibility. This verse says that all prayers prayed according to God's will, will be heard.

Now the question is of course: What is God's will? We know that God's will is for everyone to hear the gospel, so prayer for unbelievers is so incredibly important. God wants everyone to grow in faith, so He will positively answer prayers for spiritual growth. God wants everyone to read His Word and pray. Therefore, if you ask Him to help you with it, He will, because it is His will. It is not always God's will that you reach the highest position in life or that you become very rich, so He will not always hear such prayers. Sometimes it is His will and then He provides.

Jesus also experienced God's refusal.

Read Matthew 26:39-46

Why do you think God did not say yes to Jesus' prayer?

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Although Jesus knew what the will of the Father was, He prayed this prayer as a human being. Your relationship

with Father, determines whether He answers your prayers with yes or no; because you know the will of the Father. Prayer is to trust God to know what is happening and that He is in charge.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

Why do you think God did not grant Paul’s petition?

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Have you ever experienced ‘No’ as answer from God?
Do you think it was for the best?

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Paul was one of the most precious apostles of the Lord. He was specially appointed by God for the work. Yet, Paul had to experience God saying no, even though it seemed to hurt the Kingdom, or it seemed to hurt his body. Therefore, we must sometimes accept “no” as the answer from God.

God's “no” is never a blow. We see that when God told Jesus no, God sent him an angel to take care of Him.

When God said no to Paul, after praying three times, God gave him mercy and grace to continue with life. God will do the same for you, because He lets all things work for the benefit of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Prayer

Memory verse:

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Acts 1:23-25; Philippians 4:6-7, Matthew 9:37-38 and 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

Discussion questions

Read Acts 1:23-25. Do you agree that it is important to pray before you make any decisions? Do you think this is applicable to believers in their everyday lives or only to the church? Discuss the practical issues that can arise.

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Read Philippians 4:6-7. Martin Luther once said: “I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours of my day in prayer.” Discuss this statement – be practical.

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Read Matthew 9:37-38. Do you agree with the statement that it is important to pray for workers? Do you think just praying is enough?

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Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-10. Discuss the statement: God always answers prayer. Sometimes He says yes, sometimes He says no and sometimes He says not yet. Do you agree? Share if you have experienced it in your life.

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Close in prayer

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Week **2**

STOP

Stop!

LISTEN

Memory verse:

***Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face
always.***

1 Chronicles 16:11 (NIV)

PRAY



Jesus changes everything

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 1:

Who is the God we pray to?

Begin today's study with prayer.

There is no one in this world that knows you better than God who created you (Psalm 139:1-4). He does not only know everything about you - according to the Bible, He also knows every word that you plan to tell Him. As we study the wonderful gift of prayer and conversation with the Living God; it is important that we realise with whom this encounter is! This will impact our hearts, attitude, thoughts and words.

The attributes of God are vast and comprehensive. Let us look at some of the different ways the Bible introduces the God we pray to. How does the following verses describe God?

Psalm 8:1, 3-4 and Isaiah 40:28	
Exodus 2:24 and 3:15	
Matthew 6:9	

Read Psalm 5:1-2

God is always ready to hear our prayers. With which three names does David address God in this Psalm?

Verse 1	
Verse 2	
Verse 2	

Read Psalm 139:1-12

God is an omniscient God - He knows everything beforehand! God is also omnipresent - He is everywhere and knows your every movement.

Keeping this in mind, does the place where you pray or the position in which you pray, matter?

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End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 2: Why Pray?

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

From the beginning God created man to be in a personal relationship with Him and to glorify Him. God gave us His Son and it is only through faith in Him that we can enter into this relationship. A relationship will not grow without honest conversation - and prayer is the way saved sinners and their Saviour communicate.

If God is omniscient, why should we pray?

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A relationship of mutual love and adoration will only grow if the parties constantly express and share their feelings and experiences with each other.

Read James 4:8

What does this verse teach us about drawing near to God?

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Read Luke 5:16

What example did Jesus set with regards to prayer?

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Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17

How can we pray ceaselessly? What does it mean in practice?

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Prayer should become a two-way conversation with God, where He also reveals HIS thoughts and direction.

Read Exodus 3:4-15 and identify when it was God who spoke and when it was Moses.

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Prayer is a two-way conversation with the Triune God. The nature of a relationship often determines the depth of a conversation. True prayer therefor requires a very close relationship with the Living God. God created you for a relationship with Him - and one of the main components of a meaningful relationship is proper conversation. God therefor longs for you to communicate with Him. Prayer is the only way to do this.

The Bible reveals how Moses' prayer life developed as the relationship between Moses and the Lord grew. This happened because their conversations deepened as their relationship grew intimately. According to Exodus 33:11(a) the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

If you want your relationship with the Lord to grow - then you need to PRAY.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 3:

We are never alone!

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Just like Moses and the Israelites in the desert, and the disciples on the boat in the middle of the storm, we, who live in 'n hostile world, can be sure that God will always be with us, all the time!

Read Matthew 28:20

What were Jesus' last words, according to this verse?

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Isaiah often encouraged Israel not to fear. Read the following verses and write the message of encouragement that we find here in your own words.

Isaiah 40:8-10	
Isaiah 43:1-7	

God's promised presence is our constant assurance that we never have to face troubles or suffer setbacks on our own. The main reason the Bible says, "fear not" is because God is with us!

Mark 4:39 says: "He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm."

The fact is, you don't ever have to be afraid. You are free to push past your fears and pursue every dream God has given you, because He is with you. And while He is working out the details of your journey, you might as well enter His rest.

Joyce Meyer said: "When fear knocks on your door, send faith to answer."

God's word is full of the promises of His presence. Read the following verses and write the promises in your own words:

Psalm 16: 11	
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Psalm 23:4	
Revelation 21:3	

Brother Lawrence puts it this way:

“I make it my business to persevere in his Holy presence, wherein I keep myself by a simple attention and a general fond regard to God, which I may call an actual presence of God; or, to speak better, a habitual, silent, and secret conversation of the soul with God, which often causes me joys and raptures inwardly, and sometimes also outwardly, so great that I am forced to use means to moderate them and prevent their appearance to others.”

Each time you feel afraid, you should simply say: “God is with me in this; I’m never alone”. Do so until that truth becomes deeply rooted within you. And the more your faith grows, the more courageous you are going to be!

End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 4:

Be still!

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

There is room for public prayers, there is a time when we remind God of His promises. It is necessary that you praise and worship God - it is also necessary that you confess your sins and that you should pray for others. These prayers are very important and necessary. But there is also a time when you enter your inner room, close the door and spend time with God; working on your relationship with God. God's wish for us is that we will have an intimate love relationship with Him. As with any intimate relationship, it takes time and dedication. In this relationship, God wants you to spend time with Him - and He wants to spend time with you.

As in marriage, such an intimate relationship cannot realize if people are around you, or the phone is ringing, or the TV is on. No, to be alone with your loved one and to have each other's full attention, you must be isolated - you must literally close the door behind you. In the inner room it's only you and the Lord and it's as if there is a sign outside that says: "PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB."

Read Matthew 6:5-8

The typical Jewish house did not have doors in the entrances to rooms but curtains. However, usually in the middle of the house, there was a storeroom - a small dark room with a door. This was the quietest place in the house where the chance of being disturbed was small. In the light of this, what did Jesus mean in verse 6?

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Read Exodus 33:7-11

Here we read about Moses' "inner chamber". It was a tent, completely away from his home. What is similar to the room mentioned in Matthew 6: 6?

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In these verses we read about the conversation between God and Moses. Verse 11 says: *“Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend ”*. It was a conversation between confidants, between friends. Sometimes Moses talks, other times it is God speaking.

We often hear the statement: “You must make God part of your life.” Do you agree with the statement? Motivate your answer.

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God not only wants to be part of your life – He wants to be your whole life. Everything you say and do must be for and from Him. Therefore, we need to practise solitude and to focus. The following suggestions can help:

- Have a dedicated place where you and God meet. It must be a place where you can create an atmosphere and separate yourself from everything that can distract you. It can be at your home, at your job, in nature or in your car. However, it is important that your family members know where (and when) it is and that they should not bother you. This is your meeting place and time with God – nothing should bother you or distract your attention. Do not even have your mobile phone with you, even if it is on "silent".
- Time is very important. Just make a regular appointment with God for this special encounter with Him. There is no prescription of how long it should be

– only that it will be a regular meeting. Jesus often spoke to God early in the morning. Sometimes He prayed all night, or He prayed in the evening. Find the time that works best for you and make an appointment. Do not decide to do it sometime during the day - the devil will do everything in his power to prevent you from getting time with God. Make a time and keep it.

There will come times that you cannot make it - but make sure that it stays the exception and handle it like any appointment with a loved one you had to postpone.

What needs to happen is that your private time (and place) with God must become something that you do not negotiate. It must be so precious to you that you hunger and thirst to spend time with God.

The harsh reality is you cannot stay in the inner room. You have to go out into the world. There your prayer relationship is different with God. There you ask Him about decisions and confess your sins during the course of your day. Your relationship with God throughout the day will tell you a lot about your relationship with Him in your sanctum (inner room).

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 5:

What happens when you don't pray?

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Prayer is the lifeblood of a Christian's walk with God. Prayer connects us to God and prayer makes room your heart for God's correcting voice.

Can you imagine someone claiming to be your best friend and never talking to you? Whatever friendship there was, would certainly be strained. Similarly, a relationship with God is impoverished and fatigued without communication. Yet we often hear people say it is a weakness they have: "I cannot pray." Then they accept it as a given and do not do anything about it. They do not realize that it is a sin.

What does your prayer life look like? Be honest with yourself and God.

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Read Psalm 5:3:

What do you learn about the desire to pray in this verse?

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Read Psalm 145:18

What promise do we find here for those who pray?

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What does the following verses teach us about the sin of prayerlessness?

1 Samuel 12:23	
James 4:2	

Prayer is our lifeline and connection to God. Christ showed the opposite of prayerlessness in His walk on earth and modelled a prayer-filled life. If the Son of Man saw a personal need to pray, how much more should we see the same need in ourselves?

End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Prayer

Memory verse:

Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.

1 Chronicles 16:11 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Matthew 28:20
and Matthew 26:41

Discussion questions

If God is omniscient, why should we pray? Discuss.

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Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17. What does is mean to pray ceaselessly? Discuss in the group.

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Read Matthew 28:20. What was Jesus’ last words and what does it mean to us as believers?

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Do you agree with the statement: “You must make God part of your life?” Discuss.

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Read James 4:2. What happens when you don’t pray? Discuss

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Close in prayer

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Week **3**

STOP
Listen

LISTEN

Memory verse:

***Call to me and I will answer you and tell you
great and unsearchable things you do not know.***

Jeremiah 33:3

PRAY



Jesus changes everything

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 1:

Hearing from God

Begin today's study with prayer.

When we think about prayer, listening isn't generally the first thing that comes to mind. But prayer is communication with God—and that requires that we listen to what's on God's heart in addition to expressing what's on our own. That isn't something that comes naturally to most of us.

Do you find it strange to think about prayer as listening? Why?

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Listening to God is an important part of the Christian life. God desires to speak to us and we have the privilege of listening to His instruction and guidance. William Barclay once said: *"Prayer is not a way of making use of God; prayer is a way of offering ourselves to God in order that He should be able to make use of us. It may be that one of our great faults in prayer is that we talk too much and listen to little."*

God desires to communicate with His people, even more than we desire to communicate with Him! He is still the same God He has always been and He continues to speak to us.

Read the following verses and in your own words, describe what it means in respect of prayer.

Psalm 42:2	
Psalm 46:10	
Psalm 62:1	

Read Jeremiah 33:2-3

What does these verses teach us about calling to God?
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God is a God who listens and answers our prayers. We are people who speak but who often don't listen for an answer. Many of us love to talk more than we love to listen. Unfortunately, we often take the same habits into our prayer life.

Our words sometimes need to be few because of the awesomeness of the one in whose presence we stand. They also need to be few so that we might hear what God in turn has to say to us.

An ancient American Indian proverb says: *"Listen or your tongue will keep you deaf."*

If we think we are not receiving answers to our prayers, it might just be because we have not learned to listen.

As followers of Jesus Christ, it is important to consider our ability to hear from God. If we don't consider this, we are abandoning the reality of a personal relationship with God.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 2: Obstacles in hearing God

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Bridget E. Herman said: *“Prayer is the soul’s pilgrimage from self to God; and the most effectual remedy for self-love and self-absorption is the habit of humble listening.”*

However, there are several obstacles that prevent us from hearing God while we are praying.

If you have ever tried to talk to a child when others are fidgeting or racing around, you will know it is almost impossible to get through to have oneself heard and understood. Similarly, God cannot get through to us unless we are mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually still.

Read Lamentations 3:25-29

What do these verses teach us about being still?

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God does not compete for our attention. He waits for us to come to Him, ready to spend time with Him. We seek God by waiting in stillness before him and by remaining silent.

A common obstacle in hearing God's voice is our ego-centric motives. People often have the wrong motive for seeking to hear from God. For example:

- Seeking to know the future, or
- Seeking to hear from God to obtain their own safety, comfort and sense of being righteous.

This is dangerous, because it comes from being over concerned with yourself. It is not Christ-like. Frederick B Meyer said: *“So long as there is some thought of personal advantage, some idea of acquiring the praise and commendation of men, some aim of self-aggrandizement, it will be simply impossible to find out God’s purpose concerning us.”* When any false motivation is the motivation for our prayers, we will simply fail in our attempts to hear from God.

Another obstacle in hearing God is being unfamiliar with His voice or not being able to recognise when God is speaking. Dallas Willard said: *“Our failure to hear from God has its deepest roots in a failure to understand,*

accept and grow into a conversational relationship with God.”

Read John 10:4

Why could the sheep understand the shepherd's instructions and guidance?

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Hearing from God is determined by recognizing His voice and it is the following of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, that then leads to the abundance of life.

We need to make sure that our own, pre-conceived ideas of God, our own wants and sense of righteousness and the lack of an intimate relationship does not become obstacles in hearing God.

God uses lots of ways to talk to us. Hearing from God isn't so much a matter of if He is talking, but rather, whether we are listening.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 3:

Guiding principles for hearing God

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

God could have created robots instead of people. If He did create robots, there would be no conversation. But He created people, people who love Him and know Him. People who can develop a true friendship with Him and share in a cooperative creativity. We are His people, living and working with Him in His Kingdom. Prayer is therefore a conversation between God and his people who are doing things together. Learning how to hear God can only be sought as a part of a specific kind of life; the life that is a loving fellowship between the King and the people of his Kingdom.

The first guiding principle is: **LOVE GOD WITH ALL OF YOUR BEING.**

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and John 15:12-15

What does these verses teach us about our relationship with God?

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When you love someone, you want to please that person. You don't love someone in order to avoid trouble or to gain approval. It is about being with that person and sharing life together. God is not a boss that would like to order everybody, enjoying seeing everybody jumping around to His every command. Jesus wants to be your friend and co-worker. Therefore, it is our communion with God that provides the context for the communication between God and us.

The second guiding principle is: **PEOPLE CAN TALK TO GOD.**

We are important enough to God that He gave his Son for us; we are important enough to God for Him to live in us through his Spirit. Therefore, we must be important enough for Him to speak to us and to guide us whenever it is appropriate for Him to do so.

Read Psalm 25:9, Jeremiah 29:12-13 and Romans 8:26

What should our attitude be when we are speaking or listening to God?

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God's speaking to us helps us to be and do good. It helps us to be the people He has created and called us to be.

The third guiding principle is: **HEARING GOD DOESN'T MAKE US RIGHTEOUS.**

When God speaks to us, it doesn't prove that we are righteous or even right. We might not even understand correctly what He is saying.

Dallas Willard said: *"The infallibility of the Messenger and the message does not guarantee the infallibility of our reception."* This is very important because we often hear that someone might say: *"God told me"* or *"The Lord lead me to do this."* These phrases are often used to prove that: *"I am right"* or *"you should follow me"* or *"I should get my way."* These claims are not automatically justified because people say it. God's purposes of speaking to us are not merely to support us or to make us look good or to make us feel secure or to make sure that we are right.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 4:

Hearing Aids

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

If we are to hear God speak then we need to believe that God did not only speak in Biblical times long ago, as well as that He didn't suddenly go silent when the Bible was completed.

We need to believe that according to the promise given through Jesus by the Holy Spirit, God still actually speaks and makes things known to us today. We need to expect to hear from Him.

Henry Blackaby said: *"God's voice is remarkably clear. When God chose to speak to an individual in the Bible, the person had no doubt that it was God, and he knew what God was saying. When God speaks to you, you will be able to know He is the One speaking, and you will know clearly what He is saying to you".*

God speaks in different ways to different people. The following are a few ways in which God commonly speaks:

The Bible

Read Psalm 119:105

What does this verse teach you about the way God speak to you? Write it in your own words.

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The Bible is still God’s primary way of speaking to us. When we are in the dark, nothing is more valuable than to have a lamp which gives light. It does not show us too far ahead or what’s around the next bend in the road. Nor does it show what’s beyond the corner of the building. But any lamp will show us what is immediately in front of us for the next footstep or two. And that’s all we need to know.

As we meditate on the word of God, we often find that suddenly the Holy Spirit will highlight a verse or a passage and bring it to our attention and we know that God is speaking.

His Spirit

Read Psalm 51:6

What does this verse teach you about the way God speaks to you? Write it in your own words.

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If we are sensitive enough, God will develop our capacity to hear through spontaneous impressions brought about by the Holy Spirit.

Peace and Release

Read Philippians 4:6-7

What does this verse teach you about the way God speak to you? Write it in your own words.

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Often, after or during prayer, we will experience a sudden release accompanied by a deep peace. We will ‘know’ within our spirit that God is speaking to us. This only happens if you have an intimate relationship with God.

Through others

Read Proverbs 15:22

What does this verse teach you about the way God speaks to you? Write it in your own words.

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God often speaks to us through others. As we listen to other godly advisers, God often speaks confirming words through them.

There is no other way to commence to discover what God might significantly want to say to us other than by giving up on our own will. Through listening prayer, we come to understand what God's good, pleasing and perfect will on various matters is affecting our lives.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

Day 5:

Mistaken views on how God speaks

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

We have become so accustomed to the craziness associated with claims of God speaking, that we often become cynical about the very idea. Murderers claim to be inspired by God. Cult leaders lead people astray (and sometimes to their deaths) with claims that God has spoken directly to them. And many of us know people who believed they were doing what God had told them to do in their personal lives – maybe it was a career change, a cross-country move, a choice in a relationship – that they later came to regret and question if they had heard God correctly.

In his book, *Hearing God*, Dallas Willard mentions different accepted interpretations of how God speaks to us, that are incorrect. A few of these mistaken views are as follows:

A message a minute:

Some people want God to tell them what to do in every, single, little step they take in life. There will likely be times in your life where God might have something specific in mind for you – and one of the reasons it is important to know how to hear God is so that we are attentive at those times. But God gave us free will as well, and He didn't

make us to be robots who could not take a single step without being told what to do. As we follow God intentionally and consistently, we learn to live the way He calls us to live. He forms our character. And this character development helps us to make good decisions without constant, minute-to-minute guidance from God.

Bible-roulette:

This is when you open the Bible to a random page, put your finger down somewhere, and assume that where you put your finger is what God wants to say to you. Bible-roulette is not hearing God. Its more superstition than anything else. Lots of people have been terribly misguided by this method of picking disconnected verses and assuming that is what God is trying to communicate with them. They are trying to force communication from God rather than waiting on his timing.

Waiting for a booming voice:

We often think that if God spoke to us, it would have to come in a “god-like” voice – which we typically assume to be loud and forceful, like thunder. Even if it isn’t audible, we think it would be unmistakable. And God can and does speak to people in a variety of ways – He certainly could speak in a booming voice, in a way that was impossible to ignore. While it's highly unlikely you will hear God speak to you out loud, in a big booming voice, God does speak audibly through teachers, pastors,

friends, family members - even songs, events, and people we don't especially like. But that is definitely not always the case. In fact, the Bible tells us that God speaks in a still, small voice, a "gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:9-13) heard only by those who choose to listen.

Read the following verses and rewrite it in your own words:

Isaiah 55:11	
Job 33:14	
Hebrews 1:1-2	

God is inviting us to reorganize our lives in a way that keeps us walking so closely with Him that it becomes easy to know His mind and hear His voice.

The final question is: *"Do you want to hear God's voice?"* God responds to willing hearts. In the book of Revelation, we read: *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."* (Revelation 3:20). God will never force you to obey Him, but He waits for your willing response to His call.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Prayer

Memory verse:

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

Jeremiah 33:3

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Lamentations 3:25-29; Job 33:14 and Hebrews 1:1-2

Discussion questions

Do you find the concept of prayer as listening easy or strange? Discuss.

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Read Lamentations 3:25-29. What does these verses teach us about being still? Discuss.

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Read Job 33:14. Do you agree that God speaks in different ways to different people? Discuss.

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Read Hebrews 1:1-2. What do you say to people that is doing something that you know is wrong, but they claim that it is something God told them to do?

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Close in prayer

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Week 4

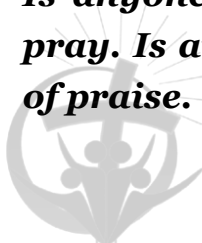
STOP

Pray

LISTEN

Memory verse:

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.



James 5:13

Jesus changes everything

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 1:

Prayer is Worship

Begin today's study with prayer.

The Son of God only followed His Father's direction while on earth and therefore seized countless opportunities spend time in prayer, seeking His Father's will. As followers of Christ, we are to learn from Jesus' life of prayer. This is achieved through listening, obeying and acting on God's Word.

It was Oswald Sanders who said: *"There is no way to learn to pray except by praying". And therefore, it is of the utmost importance to just start praying and to share in the flood of prayer creativity flooding the world. Even if it means to just pray: "Lord, please help me to pray."*

Read Matthew 6:9(b)

What was the very first thing Jesus taught His disciples to do when praying?

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Read Psalm 95

What elements of worship do we find in Psalm 95?

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How does Psalm 95 describe how we should enter God's presence? What was the Psalmist worshipping God for?

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What characteristics of God are you grateful for?

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The Lord's prayer begins with recognising God as our Father and praising Him for who He is, our Holy Father. Praise and Worshipping God is the first element of prayer which Jesus taught His disciples in the Lord's prayer. This includes songs, a prayer of thanks, "shouts" of joy or even poems such as written in the Psalms.

Oswald Sanders said prayerful praise is:

- *The act of expressing specific gratitude to God for blessings He has bestowed upon us*

- *Praise focuses on who God is and thanksgiving on what He has specifically done for us*
- *Confession of spiritual, material, physical and external blessings*
- *Praise is the vocal adoration of God*
- *Praise is unselfish*
- *Praise God for His name, righteousness and Word*

Read Psalm 95 prayerfully, thanking God for who He is and what He has done for you.

Listen to your favourite worship songs

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 2:

Praying God's will/His Word

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

In John 17:4, Jesus prays to His Father and states that He has finished the work which His Father gave Him to do. The completed work of Christ glorifies the Father, seeking and doing God's will glorifies our Father.

How did Jesus know what the will of His Father was?

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Read 1 John 5:14-15

What prayer does God answer?

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Read Colossians 1:9

How do we know what God's will is?

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Read Psalm 1:1-2 and Joshua 1:8

Spending time with God will help us to understand the will of the Father. *“Biblical meditation is a command that enriches your prayer life to the point where you will be able to pray the heart of God as revealed in Scripture.”* (Anonymous)

Meditation is something that is not well-known or well-understood. Biblical meditation means:

- An act of spiritual evaluation
- To silently bow down
- To Focus on:
 - God Himself
 - God’s Word
 - God’s works
 - Past victories
 - Positive thoughts

E.W Kenyon said: *“Fasting and long hours of prayer do not build faith . . . Reading books about faith and men of faith and their exploits stirs in the heart a deep passion for faith, but does not build faith. The Word alone is the source of faith.”*

The reason that most people do not pray is that they do not know how and what to pray, not because they do not want to pray. Praying the Word solves that problem.

If we want our prayers to be answered and to make an impact, then we should use the Word of God as the starting point for our prayers. God committed Himself to work through His body. We must apply the promises in prayer. By praying the promises, we help to build God's Kingdom and to glorify God.

Before praying God’s Word, we should meditate/reflect prayerfully on the Word which we have read. The Holy Spirit gives us understanding of the Word as we meditate on the Word and then we know His will and pray His will.

Have you listened to yourself pray before? What did you pray about? What did you request from God? Were these requests according to His Word?

Read Psalm 119:1-20. Meditate on the Word and pray Scriptures from this passage which stand out for you aloud, asking God to secure them in your heart.

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End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 3:

Praying in faith

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

The Word of God is filled with God's promises. R.A Torrey said the following, *"Prayer is the key that opens the storehouse of God's infinite grace and power."*

Read Matthew 6:11

According to Matthew 6:11, what are the things we should ask God for?

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Read 1 Chronicles 4:10

Here we find the prayer of Jabez. What specific needs does Jabez pray for?

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Jabez petitioned God, he asked God to bless him, relying on the promise of blessing from God. He also asked God to make him prosperous in his endeavours, trusting God for all his needs, in the land God gave him. He asked God to protect him, recognising that God is powerful and looking after him. Finally, he asked God to protect him from evil, from temptations and from harm. Similarly, Jesus in Matthew 6, when teaching us to pray, notes we can trust God in prayer to provide for our daily needs and we can trust God through prayer to protect us from evil.

Read Romans 10:17 and Hebrews 6:18

What builds our faith and how can we apply this principle in our personal prayers and in corporate prayer?

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When we pray the promises/the Word out loud, we build our faith. Praying the Word gives us boldness to pray. When praying the Word, we take courage from godly people in the Bible.

It is in faith which we trust God's Word and it is with faith which we pray the Word. The blessing of praying God's Word is an increase in faith as God hears our prayers.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:18-20. There are about 7000 promises in the Bible and each one is 'Yes' and 'Amen'.

Ask God to remind you from His Word, what some of the promises He has given you are. Read these promises out loud as a prayer to God; thanking Him and trusting Him.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 4:

Confession and Protection

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Read Matthew 6:12-13

Why are sins referred to as “debts”?

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Why do we need to pray “forgive us our debts”, if all our sins are forgiven when we place our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour?

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Consider the following:

- Have you ever thought how fortunate we are that God allows us,
- and wants us to ask Him to forgiveness?
- we are not able to confess our sins.
- God uses His power to unleash His wrath immediately on sinners.

No one would survive because, *“all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”* Romans 3:23

Instead, God offers us His loving kindness, His mercy and His love.

“To confess your sins to God is not to tell Him anything He doesn’t know. Until you confess them, however, they are the abyss between you. When you confess them, they become the bridge.” Frederick Buechner

How does Matthew 6:13 regard temptations related to Matthew 6:12?

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Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

What does this verse tells us about our fight against temptation?

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The late Rev. Billy Graham in his younger years held a conference with a few Christian associates. Each of them

made a list of temptations and problems in the evangelical community and determined ways to withstand them. He wrote in his autobiography. *“On top of the list was sexual immorality among preachers who were often away from their families for long periods. The men vowed to avoid situations that may appear suspicious in order to remain above reproach. From that day on, I did not travel, meet or eat alone with a woman other than my wife”*. This is a valuable lesson to learn, to be on our guard and not place ourselves in difficult situations.

What temptations are you easily prone to struggle with?
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What steps could you put into place to help you not fall into temptation.
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In Ephesians 6:18 we read that prayer is the key to spiritual warfare. Fighting temptation is a war, it is a war against our old nature versus the Spirit in us.

Read the following scriptures and note the essence of the passages. Use them as guidelines when fighting temptation or any other spiritual battle:

James 4:7	
2 Corinthians 10:3-6	
2 Corinthians 4:3-4	

“Warfare prayer simply means holding unceasingly the power of the ‘finished work of Christ’ over the hosts of evil, in their attack upon some place or person, until the victory is won.” Jessie Penn-Lewis

Spend time in sincere prayer asking God

- to show you sin in your life and to forgive you,
- to help you avoid the temptations.

End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 5:

Interceding for the lost

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Andrew Murray wrote: "Time spent in prayer will yield more than that given to work. Prayer alone gives work its worth and its success. Prayer opens the way for God Himself to do His work in us and through us. Let our chief work as God's messengers be intercession; in it we secure the presence and power of God to go with us."

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4

What is the main focus of this passage, what does this say to us about prayer?

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How important is it to God that we pray for the lost?

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It is so important to know that:

- It is God's will for people to be saved.
- No one is beyond the reach of God.
- God is in the business of the saving of souls.

As a child of God, you have the wonderful privilege of bringing the lost, whether they are family, friends, neighbours or nations from the ends of the world, to the throne of God through your prayers. Acts 17:26-27 stresses the fact that we were strategically placed where ever we are. We are part of the relationships that we are in, so that the people around us may find the answer to Life from us.

John Calvin said: *"To make intercession for men is the most powerful and practical way in which we can express our love for them."*

Intercession involves us being in the privileged position of authority before God, claiming once again His promises by praying for people, churches, causes or situations. It is praying on behalf of the lost to God to act on these promises.

Listen how Jesus was speaking to Simon Peter who was about to face a very challenging time when he denied Christ.

Read Luke 22:31-32

Name four things from this passage you learn about praying for other people.

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Read Romans 8:26

What does this verse teach us about intercession?

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Have you ever thought about someone randomly and felt the need to pray without knowing why or what to pray for? Sometimes there are people and situations which we need to pray for without knowing exactly why. It is then that we rely on the Holy Spirit to help us pray. Other times we will know what to pray for but won't know what to say. Once again, the Spirit intercedes on our behalf, revealing truth God's Word to us and claiming promises on behalf of others.

5 steps to **BLESS** people

Step 1: Select 5 friends/family/colleagues who need more of Jesus in their lives.

Step 2: Pray five blessings for them:

- **B**ody – health, protection, strength
- **L**abour – work, home security
- **E**mootional – joy, peace, hope, love
- **S**ocial – love, marriage, relationships
- **S**piritual – salvation, faith, grace, mercy, spiritual growth
- Pray that they will ask questions.

Step 3: Care for people by attending to their needs.

Step 4: Share with them: Jesus and the goodness of the Lord.

Step 5: Persevere for one year.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Prayer

Memory verse:

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

James 5:13

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Psalms 95; 1 Chronicles 4:10; 2 Corinthians 1:18-20 and 1 Corinthians 10:13

Discussion questions

Oswald Sanders said: *“There is no way to learn to pray except by praying”*. Discuss the statement.

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Read Psalm 95. According to the psalmist, how should we enter God’s presence?

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Read 1 Chronicles 4:10. What specific needs does Jabez pray for? Do you think we may pray in the same way?

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Read 2 Corinthians 1:18-20. What does these verse teach us about the promises in the Bible? Do you find it easy to remember these promises and to hold onto them?

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Close in prayer

JESUS CHANGES
MY PRAYER LIFE

Week 5

The Prayer of Jesus

Memory verse:

*Now this is eternal life: that they know you,
the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you
have sent.*

John 17:3



Jesus changes everything

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 1: Father, the hour has come

Begin today's study with prayer.

If you were to ask to repeat the Lord's Prayer you most probably would start with, *"Our Father which art in heaven"*. Jesus never called it the "Lord's Prayer," it is actually the disciples' prayer. It is the prayer the Lord gave us to pray. But the true Lord's Prayer is in John 17. It is the prayer that Jesus prayed in the shadow of the cross. He has only a few hours to live. He has just had His last meal with His disciples. He chooses to spend his last hours with them in a conversation that concludes in "the Lord's Prayer."

Jesus prayed this prayer aloud, in the presence of his disciples, so that they could hear it. He showed them the relationship between Him and Father. That is also the relationship that ought to be between Jesus and us. Every believer in Jesus Christ can pray this prayer! This prayer was designed to teach us how to pray.

Read John 17: 1, 5, 21, 24 and 25

Jesus begin this prayer with these words: *"The hour has come."* With these words Jesus looks forward with

obvious anticipation to a time of boundless opportunity that lies before Him. Surely these words, "the hour has come" mean a good deal more than the phrase we employ when we face the end of life, "*My time has come.*" He is speaking of the time He had been looking forward to all His human life; the hour of boundless possibilities; the hour He had long awaited.

Therefore, we must also pray this prayer, for we are always coming to times like this in our lives. In minor and major ways I come to a place where I must say like Jesus: "*Father the hour has come.*" I must make a choice: to live for myself, entirely self-centred as always, or take hold of the hope and the glory and the realization that lies beyond the apparent death. All of us experience these hours. We call them disappointments, setbacks or tragedies.

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We think of them as invasions of our privacy, our right to live our own lives. If we see them as Jesus saw them, we will recognize that each moment like this is an hour of great possibility. If we act on the principle of laying down our old sinful selves, we shall discover an open door to a vast and unimaginable realm of service, blessings and glory. That is what Jesus means when He says: "The hour is come."

Throughout the prayer the way Jesus talks to His Father shows His intimate relationship with His Father. To speak to God as Father was very strange to the Jews. To them it was close to blasphemy, because God was not their Father. They did not even use God's name, Yahweh, because of His Holiness. Yet, Jesus teaches His followers that they can come so close to God that they can address Him as Father.

The implications are that the people who addresses God as Father can only do that if they are children of God. Through the Holy Spirit, we are born again, if we believe that God through Jesus saved us from sin.

How does Jesus address His Father in verse 11? Why?
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God's Name, His honour is at stake. Believers must know to uphold His Name and honour in all we do and say.

How does Jesus address His Father in verse 24? Why?
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During His prayer, Jesus is revealing the qualities of God In verse 25, He addresses Him as a Righteous Father.

Thereby ensuring His brothers and sisters who listen to this prayer, that God will treat them righteously. Even though the world may try anything and everything, God is faithful and righteous.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 2: Glorify Your Son

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Read John 17: 1-5

Why does Jesus ask His Father to glorify Him?

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Jesus asks His Father to glorify Him in the eyes of His disciples and humanity, so that God can be glorified by it. He does not pray for Himself so that He can gain all glory, but that God is glorified by Him.

He speaks from an awareness of an intimate relationship. Father gives to Jesus in order that Jesus may give back to Father. It is not a once-for-all giving in which Father once gave Jesus power over all flesh, but it is a continuous giving.

Why did the Father give Jesus power?

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In the act of dying, God glorifies Jesus. In the act of dying, the Son glorifies the Father. Jesus prays for glory. Glory takes place. Glory as death and death as glory is not an easy or comfortable truth to take in. But for those of us who follow Jesus, it is absolutely central for first understanding and then participating in the glory that is our salvation and the salvation of the world.

Jesus' prayer is not about ideas or projects; it is personal involvement in all the operations of the Trinity. By virtue of Jesus' prayer, we are involved in everything that the Father does and the Son says and the Spirit instills in us.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 3:

That they may know You

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Read John 17:3-5 and Matthew 7:21-23

According to these verses, what is the most important aspect of life?

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Jesus prays: "*This is eternal life that they will know you*". This is what life is about. Life is not about eternal beauty or wealth or good friends. It's not necessarily bad, but it is all of a passing nature. Jesus has only one heart's desire: that every person will have eternal life because that is what really matters. Jesus makes it very clear that what He came to do, was to make eternal life possible for those who believe in Him.

Read John 5:24

Jesus wants you to spend eternity with Him. It does not start one day. It begins when you accept Him as your Saviour.

Jesus says eternal life is that we know God. Know Him as the only true God and also know Jesus.

What does it mean to know God? (Think about it and write down your thoughts below)

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The Greek word used here is the word *ginoosko* and it can be translated with *intimate knowledge*. The Greek dictionary translates it as follows: *“To learn to know a person through direct personal experience, implying a continuity of the relationship.”* It is not only to acquire knowledge of a person. This same word is used to describe the intimate relationship between a man and woman. Many people grew up in the church without this interpersonal relationship with God and experience no intimate contact with God. That is why many people struggle with prayer and struggle to understand the Bible. People think, because they have heard so much about God, that they know Him. However, often there is no intimate, close relationship with God.

Do you have an intimate, close relationship with God or do you just have knowledge of God? Be honest with yourself.

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The foundation of a healthy marriage is a continuous growth in intimate knowledge of each other. The longer you are married, the better you know each other. One of the other foundations is to be dedicated to each other.

Read John 17:16-17

If one was to translate John 17:17(a) directly from Greek, it would read; *"Let them be separated for you, just for you."* The emphasis is not only on a morally clean life, but on a life that will show one's dedication and intimate knowledge of God. Jesus prays and says, *"Let them be truly sanctified."*

The world will only know that God loves the world if we, who have an intimate relationship with God, allow God to change our lives so that we look more like Jesus. The key to this intimate knowledge of God is a six-letter word; P-R-A-Y-E-R. Prayer is to acquire so much intimate knowledge of God that you will understand the program and purpose of God for the world. Through prayer you have free access to the sanctuary of God.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 4: Keep them

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Read John 17:11-19 and 1 John 5:18-21

Twice in these verses Jesus, on behalf of his disciples and us, asked His Father; *"Holy Father, keep them"* (John 17:11b and 15a). This is the theme of His prayer, that Father might keep His followers. Jesus didn't pray, *"use them, or strengthen them, or teach them, or guide them."* This is what we would pray for each other. But when Jesus comes to this place where He is returning to His heavenly throne, He puts His heart's desire and dream for His followers into words, by praying: *"keep them."*

All of this simply points to the fact, that for Jesus, having a relationship with God is the most important thing. As we have learned from the *Experiencing God* series, God is more interested in our being than in our doing. Having a relationship with God, is far more important than what we do. And that is the essence of Jesus's prayer, namely that our relationship with Father remain intact, because all else He desires will come from that. That's why He prays; *"keep them."*

Jesus realizes that Christians are facing a hostile world, driven by the evil one. The devil keeps himself behind the scenes, and, as such, has created the myth that he does not even exist. But in the eyes of Jesus who saw things as they really were, the devil was a very real being. He realizes that, as human beings, we simply do not see the devil, but what we see is the devil's front, which Jesus calls "the world."

The world in which we live is dominated by the evil one, who is opposed to all that God stands for. We make a very serious mistake when we try to settle down in this world and become comfortable in it, as though this is our proper place.

The evil one wants us to enjoy all the pleasures of this world, but real joy, fulfilment, meaning and purpose, lies in a life and heart that is committed to Jesus Christ. A heart which knows Him and has fellowships with Him. All who have tried have found it to be so and know there is an inexplicable joy that accompanies this. It simply cannot be compared with anything else.

How can we be kept safe? The answer is that the power of God will protect us from this world and the evil one. What Jesus is saying here is that to keep a believer from the allure and deceit of the world is a supernatural task.

No man is smart enough to do it on his own. Nothing else is sufficient, only the power of God can keep us safe.

What do you think is your part in keeping you from the evil one?

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Read verse 17-19 again

To be sanctified means *"to be put to the proper use."* When Jesus says to the Father, *"Father, sanctify them,"* He is saying, *"Lord, fulfil Your dreams for them. Put them to their proper use. Let them find the reason they were born. Bring them to the place where they discover Your program for them, because Your Word is the truth."*

Our part is to believe the truth. A refusal to believe the truth is nothing but disbelief in God. This is a problem in the church today. We say we believe in God, but we do not believe God. Our feelings and what other people say and what the world dictates are often what we believe and that becomes our truth.

Thank God that He protects us and keeps us even when our faith fails. He is the Author and the Perfecter of faith,

and our faith rests upon the foundation of His faithfulness. But it is also true that we will never go any farther than our faith takes us. God may awaken faith anew in us, but we can never make any progress, we can never get hold of any truth, we can never appropriate any blessing that does not come from a quiet, trustful belief in what God says. Therefore, Jesus' prayer is: *"Sanctify them, put them to the proper use, let them discover what life is all about, by the truth; Your Word is truth."*

Take time now and evaluate your relationship with God. Think about your life. If there is something that the Holy Spirit brings to mind as something standing between you and God, acknowledge and confess it and devote yourself to God again.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Day 5:

So that the world may believe

Begin the study by spending time in prayer.

Read John 17:20-26

For whom is Jesus praying in verse 20 and what is He praying?

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This part of Jesus' prayer is one of the most awe-inspiring words in this prayer. He prays for those who will come to faith through the words of the disciples. It means that He also prays for us here. It is wonderful to know that Jesus considered our salvation and that of our children so important, that He prayed for us long before we were born. Jesus stands with Father and acts on our behalf.

Read 1 John 2:1-2

What is our only hope of salvation when we sin?

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Even though we may sin, Jesus is still praying for us. If Jesus prayed for us nearly 2,000 years ago, it is important to notice what He prayed. He prays: *“That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”* (John 17:21)

What does Jesus mean with the words: *“that all of them may be one”*?

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When you gain intimate knowledge of God and you begin to live in isolation of the world in total devotion to God, you begin to strive for unity with God. There is a unity between your will and God's will. He says in this passage (verses 21, 22 and 23) that we may be one with the Triune God. Being one with God is to think like Him about the lost world. God always thought globally. John 3:16 says, because God loved the world so much. Jesus sends His disciples to all nations (Matthew.28: 19), and He instructs them to be witnesses to the ends of the world (Acts 1: 8). He looks with love and compassion at the world. If we are one with Him, then we must also have a passion for the lost world. God has always been a sending God. "Abraham go; Moses, I send you to free my

people, Peter go, and you will go." God's heart is that people will be willing to go. God focus on the people around you; all you must do, is be one with God.

The world will only believe if there is unity in His church. Unity and similarity are not the same. But in God's family and between churches, there should be some kind of unity in thinking about the lost world. Why? Jesus says this again and again: so that the world can believe and so that Jesus and God can be glorified.

The world must know that Jesus is the answer, but the world cannot see this if we are not united. How are you going to win your family, your friends, your colleagues at work, your city, your country for Jesus? Only if we as Christians agree that we have one enemy and that there is only one solution for this world, namely JESUS.

Jesus describes this relationship and says it is the same as the relationship between Father and Son. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one and have a common purpose and that is that people must come to believe in God. This intimate relationship between Father and Son must exist between the followers of Jesus and exist between them and God. Their thoughts, interests and deeds must be the same, so the world can see these people are

different; they have a different driving force and purpose from the rest of the world.

If you live intimately with God, then you will know His heart. If you love Him, you will do everything in your power to live according to His heart's desires.

The world must see through the lives of the children of God that:

- Jesus is the authentic voice of God;
- He is the authoritative utterance of what God intends to do in human affairs;
- He is the key to world history and reality, the revelation of the invisible God and therefore the only way for man to God.

When the world becomes convinced of this, the rest is up to them. Our task, as believers in Jesus, is not to save the world, but to make people aware that Jesus has been the Game Changer through history and still today.

Christians must not isolate themselves from that world. Reaching out to the world is the very thing we are here to do. It is the goal, the target; the objective.

End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Prayer

Memory verse:

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 17:3

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

John 17:1-26 and Matthew 7:21-23

Discussion questions

Share with the group the verses in John 17 that is the most inspiring, new or touching for you personally. Explain why.

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Read Matthew 7:21-23. What is the most important aspect of life? Discuss

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How do you feel about the fact the Jesus, even though you haven't been born yet, prayed for you? How does this influence your relationship with Him?

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Read John17:17-19 again. What does is mean to be sanctified? How does this impact your spiritual life?

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Close in prayer

Spending an hour in prayer

Spending an hour in prayer might sound very daunting for some people. Dr. Ralph F. Wilson describes it as follows:

Praying for an hour is like sitting down in a restaurant with a friend; rather than just ordering a cheeseburger and chocolate shake at the drive-up window. Somehow, as you sip coffee together, you find a lot of things to say. And, it's a whole lot more satisfying than just a quick wave and a 'Hi-how-are-you?'"

If talking to God for that long seems intimidating, it's probably because we're still learning just to share ourselves with Him as we would with a friend. The following suggestions are just that: suggestions designed to help you take courage to try spending an hour with the Lord. It is not a pattern or a recipe that needs to be followed to the letter to bring success.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS:

Spending an hour in prayer should be a fulfilling, uplifting time; a time when you can talk freely to your Heavenly

Father. Dr. Ralph F. Wilson makes the following suggestions, to ensure that this hour will be well spend:

- Make sure that you are comfortable - The stiffer you feel, the more formal your relationship will be.
- Try praying out loud, though not loud enough to disturb others. Being able to hear yourself pray really helps. You'll find that your mind doesn't wander as easily and that you can pray more fervently.
- Don't feel you have to do all the talking. Discuss something with the Lord, then be silent for a time. Sometimes God uses these times of listening to implant His answers in our minds. Gradually you'll find that prayer can be a conversation.
- And finally, don't worry about keeping to the times suggested here. It's only to get you started, to help you believe you can spend sixty minutes in prayer. You'll find God will guide you in your prayer time. Remember, it is not a program, it's a growing relationship.

I want to encourage you, go for it. Before you put this down, set a time when you will spend an hour with God. You can't learn to pray from reading any more than you can learn to swim from a textbook. It's time to get into the water.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

60 MINUTES IN PRAYER

Beginning prayer: (1 minute)

- Ask God to help you spend this time profitably with Him.
- Ask His guidance. Give yourself to Him for this hour.

Adoration, Praise and Thanksgiving (10 Minutes)

- Worship Him – use Bible verses to focus on who He is – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Sing to the Lord or listen to worship music.
- Praise Him for His blessings and goodness to you and your family and friends.

As your heart begins to adore Him, you'll sense His presence more deeply.

Petition (14 minutes)

- Confession: Spend a few minutes going over recent sins which weigh on you. But don't dredge up old ones. Read 1 John 1:9. Ask His cleansing, then accept it by faith and thank Him for it. He is far more willing to forgive than you are to ask.
- Pray About Life's Difficulties. Use this time to talk over with the Lord your own personal struggles. Discuss with Him your relationship with your special loved one

or spouse, your family, your hang-ups, your financial needs, your studies or job.

But don't stop here. Be sure you go on to praying for the needs of others.

Intercession (35 Minutes)

- Pray for friends, relatives, neighbours and fellow workers. Don't just read a list of names to God, but talk to Him about their lives and needs. You can boldly ask Him for their salvation because Jesus died for them. Ask God to bring Christians into their lives, to alter circumstances, and to give you opportunities for witness and sharing in depth.
- Pray for your Church and its needs. Call on Him for a deep renewal of love for God. Pray for your pastor and church leaders. Intercede for the Sunday school children and the youth, the families, the singles and the widows, the sick and lonely. Call on God for an increase in giving so the church doesn't have to struggle so much. Pray for the Christian organizations working with the college students, the children and the homeless in your community. Then intercede for those you know in special need.
- Pray for our country. That God will guide our prime minister and legislators, our legal system, our police and firemen and our service men and women. Pray

for righteousness in government and a public policy sensitive to the needs of the oppressed.

- Pray for the lost, for the work of Christ throughout the world. Intercede for unreached peoples, call on God to send laborers into His harvest. Pray for missionaries, for third-world pastors and churches, for the people of God who are suffering persecution. Pray for peace. Ask God to give food, shelter and hope to the hungry.

And so, like a mere thought, an hour in prayer comes to an end.

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

Memory verses

Week 1:

if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14

Week 2:

*Look to the Lord and his strength;
seek his face always.*

1 Chronicles 16:11

Week 3:

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

Jeremiah 33:3

Week 4:

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

James 5:13

Week 5:

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 17:3

JESUS CHANGES MY PRAYER LIFE

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