

PRAYER

Michael DeFazio • 13 Sessions



**NEXT
LEVEL** 
ONLINE

OZARK CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

SESSION 1: How to Learn to Pray

Opening Thoughts

Two Framing Observations:

1. Prayer is _____.
 - Biblical Examples –
 - Biblical Commands –
 - Biblical Invitation –
2. Prayer is _____.

Where to Begin

- Who can teach us to pray? (Luke 11:1; Matthew 6:5-15)
- Key Insight: *The only way to learn to pray is...*

Challenge: Set a timer for five minutes and pray.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How satisfied are you with your current prayer life? Why?
2. What is the easiest aspect of prayer for you? What makes prayer challenging for you?
3. How would you feel and what would you say if someone asked you to teach them to pray?
4. What did you pray about for your five minutes?
5. What do you hope to get out of this series? What role do you play in obtaining that goal?

SESSION 2: The Secret to Prayer

Opening Thoughts

- In order to understand the secret to prayer, you need to know the secret to basketball.
- The secret is right there in the Lord's prayer but we need eyes to see it.

The Secret to Prayer in Matthew 6

- Tozer on what matters most...
- The secret to prayer is having a right view of _____.
- Our relationships are often defined by how we _____ one another.

Matthew 6:9 – *Our Father in heaven...*

- Note what makes prayer prayer!
- Prayer only makes sense, only works, if we _____ God.
- Can God be trusted?
 - o “Our Father” – We are talking to a God of deep _____.
 - o “in the heavens” – We are talking to a God of immense _____.

Challenge:

- Set a timer for two minutes. Spend that time writing (or typing) truth about God.
- Set a timer for three minutes. Talk to God in whatever way makes sense if all of that is true.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. If asked before this lesson, what would you have said is the secret to prayer? How does this lesson help you think through a question like that?
2. How does your vision of God line up with the one implied in the first line of Jesus' prayer? Why? Where have you gotten your ideas about God (true and untrue)?
3. What did you write about God during your two minutes? What did you pray? What impact might it have on you to meditate regularly on these things you believe are true?

SESSION 3: The Basic Pattern of Prayer

Opening Thoughts

- Remembering what we've learned so far...
- What is the basic pattern of prayer?

On Aligning with God

- Quick takes on Matthew 6:9-10:
 - o "Hallowed be your name"
 - o "Your kingdom come"
 - o "Your will be done"
- More on the "kingdom" of God/heaven –
 - o Genesis 1 – "kings and queens"
 - o _____ kingdom by _____ power
- As we pray, we must be ready to _____.

Challenge: pray for the alignment of different parts of your life with God's honor/kingdom/will.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What other breakdowns of the elements of prayer have you heard in the past? How can all these help us? What are their limitations?
2. How might it help strengthen or regulate your prayer life to think in terms of *address, align, ask*?
3. What parts of your life are properly aligned with God's honor/kingdom/will? What parts are not?
4. Why is prayer the first step in aligning our lives with God's value and purposes?
5. Is there anything you currently sense God commanding you to do? Will you do it?

SESSION 4: On Asking God for Things

Opening Thoughts

- True or False: Eventually we move on beyond the basics of prayer.
- The secret to prayer is that it's not about prayer. It's about God. And God is...

What to Ask For (General Rules)

- Start by remembering what you have been given.
- Ask for what you need (letting the Bible be your guide)

What to Ask For:

1. Provision (Mt 6)
2. Forgiveness (Mt 6)
3. Protection (Mt 6)
4. Wisdom (Jas 1)
5. Faith (Mk 9:24; Lk 17:5)
6. Evangelism (Col 4)
7. God (Ps 27; 42; 63)

Three Things to Remember:

- God typically doesn't answer our prayers in immediate, obvious ways.
- As we ask, we must be ready to put answers into practice.
- We honor God when we ask him for things, because the very act of asking...

Challenge: Ask God for things!

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Should you get to a point where you stop asking God for things? *Why or why not?*
2. How do the things you ask for compare to the list presented in the lesson?
3. Which of the "things to remember" are easiest for you to forget? What happens when you forget this?
4. What are some things God has given you in the past (and present) that you haven't thought about in a while?

SESSION 5: The Liberating Power of Routine

Opening Thoughts

- Why (not) talk about routine?
- Do you believe in the power of prayer?

The Power of Prayer

- Prayer certainly seems powerful... But at the same time...
- Prayer is only and always precisely as powerful as its _____.
- God shares his power with...

Once More, Routine

- Redemptive power flows through regular prayer.
 - o Reading Acts with one eye on the clock –
 - o Mark 9:14-29 (with Mark 1:35 and Luke 5:16)

“Rules” for making a routine:

- Routine must be our servant not our _____.
- Routines are typically _____ and seasonal.

Challenge: Work on a simple routine for the next two weeks

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Do you love routine, hate it, or somewhere in between? Why?
2. When you think specifically about routine with respect to prayer, do you see it as a help or hindrance? (Or if both, how so?)
3. Are you convinced that routine is important for prayer?
4. If you're with a group, share what kind of routine you plotted out.

SESSION 6: Why Pray the Psalms?

Opening Thoughts

- _____ you pray is more important than _____ you pray.
- _____ you pray matters. Consider... the Psalms!

Ten Reasons to Pray the Psalms:

1. If we didn't have a _____ and God decided to inspire one, we would never question whether to make it the center of our prayer lives. We have such a book.
2. When we pray Psalms, we pray like _____ and the _____.
3. When we pray the Psalms, we pray with the _____ church.
4. We don't leave our prayers up to _____ or whim.
5. Gives us something _____ to pray about and focus on.
6. Keeps our prayers God-centered, and draws attention to _____ in different ways.
7. Helps us pray _____.
8. Helps us pray through _____ the emotions and experiences.
9. Helps us _____ with others by guiding us to pray through emotions and experiences even when we're not feeling that way ourselves.
10. Makes us pray _____ things about God and therefore makes us familiar with those truths. Transforms us by renewing our minds.

Challenge:

- Check back in on your routine...
- Pray two Psalms before moving on

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How is your prayer routine going? (If you're in a group, talk with one another about it. If alone, talk to God about it.)
2. Have you ever heard of praying the Psalms? What is your initial response to the suggestion?
3. Which of these reasons do you find most compelling? Are you motivated to give it a shot?
4. What challenges do you foresee in praying the Psalms?

SESSION 7: How to Pray the Psalms

Opening Thoughts

- Reminder: we learn to pray by...
- Idea: The goal is not to get through the Psalms, but to...

Ten Ways to Pray a Psalm:

1. Read the whole Psalm, discern the _____ idea, and pray about that idea (or image or question, etc).
2. Read the whole Psalm line-by-line or verse-by-verse, _____ after each bit to pray through whatever comes to mind from that verse.
3. Read until something _____, stop, and pray about whatever connected.
4. Summarize what this Psalm reveals about _____, and then pray (praise) through that revelation.
5. Memorize the Psalm (or some portion of it) and recite it to yourself throughout the day.
6. Start with a particular need or concern in your own life and read until something in the Psalms connects with it, and then pray through it in whatever ways come to mind.
7. Start with some _____ person in mind and read until something in the Psalms connects with them, and then pray for them in whatever ways come to mind.
8. _____ all or part of the Psalm.
9. Read it aloud in _____ (2-3 times), and invite folks to pray for whatever the Psalm brings to mind.
10. Make a temporary _____ organized around shrewd goals, and keep it.

Challenge:

- Choose one of these methods and go for it.
- If you're going weekly, then your routine timeframe is up. Plan another routine for the next three weeks with Psalms as a central part.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Which of these ways of praying the Psalms seems most natural or desirable to you? Why? (Start with the ones you like!)
2. Which of these praying methods is unclear or weird? If you're in a group, help each other get a sense of what I'm getting at. (Thanks for the assistance!)
3. Which way(s) did you pray for your five minutes? How did that go?
4. Why is it critical to remember what the goal is and is not?
5. Where will you go from here with respect to praying the Psalms?

SESSION 8: Twelve Rules for Hearing God (pt 1)

Opening Thoughts

Twelve “Rules” for Hearing God (pt 1)

1. No part of God is available for our _____, including his voice.
2. Hearing God is a _____ and _____ experience of people who walk with God.
3. Hearing God is not like hearing people because God does not “_____” the same way we (typically) speak.
4. God speaks or communicates in various ways:
 - a. Creation –
 - b. People –
 - c. Scripture –
 - d. Circumstances –
 - e. Directly –
5. We learn to hear God better by experience. The more you listen to God’s voice, the better you recognize it.

Challenge: Think back through your life story. Write out various times when you thought God was communicating with you.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Have you ever “heard God’s voice”? Share the stories, even if you’re not sure how to describe what went down!
2. Why is it *critical* to think about God “speaking” to us as not necessarily being hearing an audible voice?
3. Which of these rules/guidelines is it important for you personally to hear?
4. Do you believe God regularly communicates with you? How well are you listening?

SESSION 9: Twelve Rules for Hearing God (pt 2)

Opening Thoughts

Twelve “Rules” for Hearing God (pt 2)

6. God’s guidance always serves his broader goals for our lives.
7. There are many possible reasons why we may be _____ to hear God.
 - a. Hand of God’s discipline...
 - b. Sand of the desert...
 - c. Green light of freedom...
8. God almost always re-speaks truth he has _____ revealed.
9. God’s direct communication typically makes best sense in _____.
10. When God speaks clearly, no one else’s _____ matters.
11. As always, our _____ matters but we must not let it trump what Scripture reveals.
12. People who _____ to hear God do hear God more than people who don’t.

Challenge: Read 2 Samuel 3 and 4. Then say “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” If you hear him give you an answer, write it down.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Once again, which of these are you most prone to forget?
2. When have you experienced God’s silence for a time? Have you yet been able to discern how God was working in that season?
3. Are you in a season of silence right now? Without trying to fix things, how can your community come around with you and be present in this tough time?
4. How nervous are you about the idea of God communicating personally to people? Why?
5. What are some good reasons we might not want to hear God? (Hint: Think about what he actually said to people in Scripture!) Do you nevertheless want to hear from him? Why?

SESSION 10: More Kinds of Prayer

Opening Thoughts

- This session: more kinds of prayer
- What kinds of prayer have we already covered?

Six More Kinds of Prayer

1. _____ (Psalm 4:4; 131; James 1:19-20)
2. _____ (Psalm 9:1; 1 Thess 5:18)
3. _____ (Psalms 113, 117, 135; 146-150; Romans 11:33-36)
4. _____ (Psalm 32; Psalm 51; 1 John 1:9-10)
5. _____ (Psalm 13:1-4; Psalm 35; Psalm 74; Lamentations)
6. _____ (1 Samuel 12:23; Ephesians 3:14-19, Philippians 1:9-11)

Challenge: Evaluate the harmony of your prayer life.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Which kinds of prayer are you most prone to? Which kinds do you avoid?
2. Which kind of prayer did you decide to pray? Why?

SESSION 11: Common Questions about Prayer (Part 1)

Opening Review

Questions about Prayer

1. If God knows what I need and what I'm thinking, then why do I need to talk to him about it?
2. Is it okay to express anger and frustration with God in prayer? Is it wrong to pray for judgement on people?
3. How do you pray against spiritual warfare? Is there a particular way?
4. What is the "right posture" of prayer? Does posture matter?
5. Is there such a thing as a prayer that is too short or too long? How do I know when I have reached a good length?
6. How do you break out of the shame cycle when it comes to prayer?
7. How does one pray for both a specific outcome as well as God's will without it coming across as a lack of faith or an opening for the opposite to occur?
8. How do we know when God is saying "no" and when God is saying "wait"? What should I do when it seems like God is saying no?
9. How do I stay faithful when it feels like God isn't staying faithful in answering my prayers?

Challenge: If you are struggling with unanswered prayer, write out the answer to these two questions: What do I believe is true about God? How then should this change how I regard my unanswered prayer? Also, find a seasoned Christian and ask them what is the longest you have had to wait to see God answer your prayers?

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Which of these questions resonate with you? To what degree are you helped or satisfied with the answers?
2. What is your typical prayer "posture" or length? Do you feel compelled to make any changes in this regard?
3. How well do you strike a balance between making bold requests to God and also acknowledging that his will may differ from our desires?
4. What other questions do you have about prayer?
5. What will you do with your questions? How will you go about seeking answers?

SESSION 12: Common Questions about Prayer (Part 2)

More Questions about Prayer

1. Why should we pray?
2. What difference does it make for prayer that God is Triune (Father, Son, and Spirit)? Should we pray to the different members of the Trinity?
3. What does it mean when the Bible says to ask/pray in Jesus' name?
4. What about praying for dead people or to the saints?
5. Why can't I clear my thoughts to pray for longer than like 15 minutes?
6. How do I know if prayer is working?
7. If I pray asking God to heal or change a situation that is in his will, but my heart doesn't have faith in the moment to believe it, is it ignored? How does prayer work when you lack faith or hope?
8. How do I better discern what God is saying to me through prayer?
9. Is having a conversation with God the same as intentionally praying? I often hear about people saying they constantly talk with God throughout the day but is that really the same as praying to him?

Challenge: Take five minutes and just pray.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Which of these questions resonate with you? To what degree are you helped or satisfied with the answers?
2. How does the fact that God is Triune impact your prayer life? How do you want it to?
3. Do you pray "in Jesus' name"? Why? Will you continue doing so? Why?
4. Why is it crucial to evaluate our prayer lives carefully?
5. How can we stay honest about our questions without letting our questions keep us from praying?

SESSION 13: Prayer Alone and Together

Opening Thoughts

- What have we learned so far?
- How do we live out the call to “pray continually”?
 - o Spontaneous _____ Scheduled
 - o Alone _____ Together

Praying Alone (Personal Prayer)

- Practice the _____ of God.
- Make prayer a regular part of your _____
 - o Make adjustable, temporary, seasonal commitments and keep them.
 - o Note Israel’s liturgical rhythms: daily, weekly, monthly, yearly
 - o Readjust as needed!

Praying Together

- Some thoughts on Corporate Prayer:
 - o Make prayer more than a transition in your worship services.
 - o Do whatever it takes to train people to pray.

Some Thoughts on Prayer

Challenge: Make a plan for your continued life of prayer.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What have you learned in this series that you hope you never forget?
2. How are you already praying differently because of the attention you’ve been giving to prayer?
3. What adjustments to your prayer life do you sense God calling you to make (if any)?
4. What is your plan moving forward (alone and together) to pray continually?