

DISCIPLESHIP COURSE

An Invitation to Follow

PART 6 | FORMATION | PERSISTENT PRAYER

"Prayer is about connecting with your Heavenly Father — who also happens to be all-loving, all-knowing, and all-powerful."

THE BIG IDEA

Most followers of Jesus admit they struggle with prayer. It feels boring, hard to focus on, or difficult to find time for. But the disciples who walked with Jesus noticed something: every time he came back from prayer, he was different - empowered, renewed, aligned with the Father. They didn't ask him how to perform miracles. They asked: teach us to pray.

To be a disciple of Jesus is to be a person of prayer. Prayer is not an accessory we add to the side of our faith - it's a priority, a place of connection, and a source of formation.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

"In prayer, real prayer, we begin to think God's thoughts after him - to desire the things he desires, to love the things he loves, to will the things he wills."

— Richard Foster

"True prayer is neither a mere mental exercise nor a vocal performance. It is far deeper than that - it is a spiritual transaction with the Creator of the heavens and earth."

— Charles Spurgeon

"Prayer is putting oneself in God's hands and his disposition, and listening to his voice in the depth of our hearts."

— Mother Teresa

HOW TO BUILD A LIFE OF PERSISTENT PRAYER

1

Find Your Place

Jesus often withdrew to lonely, quiet places to pray (Luke 5:16). You can pray anywhere - in the car, between meetings, on the go. But for focused, formational prayer, find a dedicated spot: distraction-free, away from your phone, somewhere you can be fully present and alone with God. This is the practice of solitude - not loneliness (being by yourself), but solitude (being with God).

Luke 5:16

"But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

2

Connect With Your Heavenly Father

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he began with 'Our Father in heaven.' Two truths to hold together: God is everywhere (the Greek word for 'heaven' - Ouranos - means 'in the air,' all around us), and God is holy (unique, without parallel, unlike any earthly father). You're not praying a long-distance prayer. God is right where you are - and He invites you to call Him Father.

Matthew 6:9

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

"God is the reality whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere."

— Augustine

3

Bring Your Asks to Him

Prayer is primarily about connection with God — but He's also a Father who says, 'What do you need? Talk to me.' Jesus modelled this: ask for daily provision, ask for forgiveness, ask for strength against temptation. When we pray, things happen. Sometimes when we don't pray, things don't happen. We can approach the throne of grace boldly, with confidence, in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

"Let us approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

THE LORD'S PRAYER AS A TEMPLATE (MATTHEW 6:9–13)

Jesus gave his disciples a model for prayer. Here's what each phrase teaches us about how to pray:

Jesus' Words (Matt. 6)	What It Teaches Us
<i>"Our Father in heaven"</i>	Approach God as a loving, personal Father who is everywhere present
<i>"Hallowed be your name"</i>	Begin with worship - recognise who God is: holy, unique, without parallel
<i>"Your kingdom come, your will be done"</i>	Align your desires with God's purposes, not the other way around
<i>"Give us today our daily bread"</i>	Ask for provision - God invites us to bring our practical needs to him
<i>"Forgive us our debts"</i>	Ask for and receive forgiveness freely; don't carry guilt alone
<i>"Lead us not into temptation"</i>	Ask for strength - acknowledge your need for God's power to live faithfully

A FINAL THOUGHT

Prayer is not a transaction - it's a relationship. A persistent prayer life will draw you deeper into an abiding relationship with God, align you with his heart, and form you more and more into the image of Jesus. Don't make prayer an afterthought. Make it a priority.

"If you had access to someone who was all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving — wouldn't you want to talk to them as often as possible? That's exactly the invitation disciples of Jesus receive every single day."

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. Honestly, how would you describe your current prayer life? What's the biggest barrier for you — time, focus, knowing what to say, or something else?
2. Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them to pray after watching him pray. Who or what has shaped the way you think about prayer?
3. Do you have a dedicated "place" for focused prayer? If not, what would it look like to create one this week?
4. Look at the Lord's Prayer template above. Which element (worship, alignment, provision, forgiveness, strength) do you most neglect in your own prayers?