



Growing in Fervent Prayer

Seven Day Application Guide

Introduction

What is Prayer?

Prayer, for the Christian, is not merely talking to God, but responding to the One who has initiated toward us. He has spoken first. This is not a conversation we start, but a relationship into which we've been drawn. His voice breaks the silence. Then, in prayer, we speak to the God who has spoken. Our asking and pleading and requesting originate not from our emptiness, but his fullness. Prayer doesn't begin with our needs, but with his bounty. Its origin is first in adoration, and only later in asking. Prayer is a reflex to the grace he gives to the sinners he saves. It is soliciting his provision in view of the power he has shown. Prayer is the glad response of the bride, in a joyfully submissive relationship with her Groom, responding to his sacrificial and life-giving initiatives. And so it is stunning grace we find in such a simple statement from the psalmist, which applies to every Christian, "The Lord accepts my prayer." (Ps. 6:9)

--David Mathis, "*Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines*" (pg. 94)

Prayer should reflect our dependence on and gratitude to God for His perfect wisdom and sovereignty in creating all things and giving us our purpose.

How to pray

Throughout this packet we will be learning more about approaching God in humility and gratitude in prayer. This packet will teach you how to pray through the A.C.T.S. acronym which stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication. Each of these areas is an important aspect of prayer that glorifies the Lord.

There will be suggestions and practical ideas under each area, but we must remember that prayer isn't about saying certain words, or "heaping up empty phrases" (Matt. 6:7), but speaking with and seeking wisdom from our perfectly wise and gracious God.

When we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior we can approach God the Father in confidence, knowing that we do not have to fear condemnation, but that Jesus is constantly interceding for us at the right hand of the Father.

- **Meditate on Jeremiah 33:3 and Hebrews 4:14-16. What do these passages and the definition from David Mathis teach you about prayer?**
- **What is your attitude about prayer in your life right now?**
- **Ask God to help you have a teachable heart as you spend the week learning more about prayer and who God is.**

Day 1: Adoration

Prayer is not something we initiate but something that begins with God. When we approach our Heavenly Father in prayer, we should be spending time in awe and gratitude of who He is. Adoration stems from seeing God as He is, as both the Sovereign Creator and Ruler of all creation, and as our loving Father.

So, where do we begin as we are seeking to learn how to spend time in adoration or awe of who God is? Psalm 111:10 gives us an idea of where to start. Read that passage now.

What does this verse teach you about the attitude we should have when we come to the Lord in prayer?

Throughout the Bible we can learn about the character of God by studying the titles He goes by. Here are just a few of the names that God is known as in Scripture:

- Provider (Genesis 3:21, 22:14; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21)
- Healer (Exodus 15:26)
- Refuge/Hiding place (Psalm 46)
- Sanctifier (Exodus 31:13; Philippians 1:6-11)
- Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21)
- Shepherd (Psalm 23; John 10:11)

Spend some time meditating on these titles of God in adoration and praise of who He is. What is something God showed you about His character and how should that knowledge change the way that you are living?

Praying through Scripture can help you see God's character more clearly as well. Praying through the Psalms can be a helpful way to start praying through Scripture.

- **Pray through one Psalm everyday and ask God to help you learn more about His character.**
- **Reflect on what God is teaching you about Himself and praise Him for His character.**

Day 2: Confession

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."—James 5:16

Confession is the act of acknowledging how we have sinned against God and others. It is followed by repenting, or turning from those ways and asking for God's forgiveness. Part of confession is asking God to help you walk in the light and forsake the path of darkness.

Read Galatians 5:16-25 and 1 John 1:5-9. What do these verses teach you about walking in the light?

Spend time in prayer asking God to help you see areas where you may not be fleeing from darkness. An important aspect of being able to walk in the light is sharing your sin struggles with another believer who can encourage and exhort you by pointing you to the truth.

Is there someone in your life that can help you walk in the light? Who is someone you can be coming alongside?

Confession also involves addressing lies you may be believing about who God is and who you are in Christ. These questions can help you see some areas where you may be believing lies about God.

- **Are you able to rest with a grateful heart in the truth that you are completely justified and forgiven because of Jesus' death and resurrection in your place?**
- **Do you struggle to believe that God is truly good and worthy of your trust?**
- **Is there a way that you have been using your freedom in Christ to gratify the desires of your flesh?**
- **Does pride keep you from being quick to confess your sin, either privately or corporately?**

Day 3: Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is the grateful acknowledgement for who God is and what He has done in your life. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19 we see how prayer and thanksgiving are connected. Read that passage now.

What do these verses teach you about how you can cultivate a grateful heart?

Addressing Pride:

One of the main attitudes that can keep us from having a grateful heart is pride. Pride is defined in the dictionary as having a high or inordinate opinion of one's own dignity, importance, merit or superiority, whether in our thoughts or behavior.

Spend time in prayer and ask God to help you see manifestations of pride in your life that are keeping you from walking in humility and gratitude. Some questions that may help in this:

- **When you don't get your way do you get angry or resentful?**
- **Do you have unrealistic/unbiblical expectations of what others should do for you?**
- **Are you unwilling to admit when you have done something wrong or need help?**
- **Do you get defensive when people point out sin or wrongdoing in your life?**

Putting on contentment is how we flee from pride and cultivate a grateful heart.

Contentment can be defined as deep satisfaction with God's will. (*Learning Contentment*, Nancy Wilson)

- **Where are you struggling to find contentment in your life?**
- **What are some things that you have a complaining heart about?**
- **Is there an injustice in your life that you haven't been able to get past and need to bring to the Lord?**

True contentment can only be found in and with God. Our hope and purpose are found in the gospel. Spend time reading and praying through Scripture like 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Romans 5:6-11; Ephesians 2:1-10 and John 3:16-21. **Meditate on the Gospel** and thank God for sending His beloved Son to die in your place, completely taking on God's wrath for your sin and restoring your relationship with Him.

One resource that can be helpful in preaching the gospel to yourself on a daily basis is *A Gospel Primer for Christians* by Milton Vincent.

Day 4: Supplication

Oftentimes supplication, or asking things of God, can be where most prayer is focused. While God tells us to come to Him with all our joys and fears, there is so much more to supplication than bringing our requests to God. Supplication like the rest of these aspects of prayer should start with God and His desires.

When Jesus is teaching the disciples how to pray in Matthew 6, praying for the kingdom of God is a major aspect of the prayer. Each of these sections can help you see what it means to pray for God's kingdom and your involvement in it.

How to pray for God's kingdom:

**1. For His kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven
(Matthew 6:7-13)**

- Daily, without heaping up empty, repetitive phrases or seeking recognition from others.
- Recognizing that God's kingdom means His perfect rule and reign over all things
- Praying that His rule and reign would be fully realized, meaning that the end times come

2. For the gospel to be spread to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:19-20)

- Praying for the fulfillment of the Great Commission and your involvement in it
- Pray for God to help you be a bold witness to your family, friends, coworkers and community.
- Pray for unbelievers, both in your life and across the globe. Pray for evangelism to be powerful and effective, including your own personal evangelism

3. For the church to be growing in unity and holiness (Psalm 133; 1 Cor. 12:12-27)

- Pray that the church would show the unity and love of the Trinity
- Pray that every Christian would continue to grow in submission and passionate obedience to God

4. For the fulfillment of Jesus' rule over all nations (Philippians 2:1-11)

- Pray with longing for the coming of our King
- Pray that every nation, tribe and tongue would see and worship the glory of God

Why do we pray for the Kingdom?

Everything is related to the Kingdom:

- We live in a time where the Kingdom is already here, but not fully recognized
- God already rules and reigns over all things, yet many reject His rule. Someday He will no longer tolerate their rejection and will judge them (Phil. 1:3-11)
- Jesus inaugurated the realized Kingdom of God by bringing the Gospel and calling people to repent and believe (Mark 1:15-16; Matt. 4:12-17)
- He spoke of a day when He would come again to finish judging His enemies and usher in the New Heavens and Earth (Psalm 96:13; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; Acts 17:31; Matthew 12:36; John 12:48; Romans 2:16; Revelation 20:11-15)
- We are currently in the "in-between" stage of the Kingdom, therefore we ought to do our best to speak and pray for the fully realized coming of the Kingdom

Day 5: Adoration and Confession

When we are regularly spending time in adoration of who God is it should naturally lead us to see areas where we need to put on humility and seek wisdom from God in how to live a life that is glorifying to Him.

God knows all our shortcomings and doubts, but confession gives us the opportunity to recognize these before Him and seek His help in putting off darkness and walking in light. One way that we can walk in the light is by addressing lies that we may be believing about God and seeking the truth in the Word and in prayer.

Addressing doubts or unbelief:

Below are some doubts or unbelief that you may be struggling with or have struggled with in the past. In Romans 12:1-2 we are called not to be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of our minds, that by testing we may discern what is the will of God. While we will never know some things about God's will, by meditating on the truth we will be able to live a life that is more pleasing to the Lord. **Pray and ask God to help you put off any doubts or unbelief you may have, and to help you believe the truth.**

Example Prayer: *Lord, help me to believe that you are good all the time, as your Word says. I confess that I have doubted your goodness to me and to others. I wrestle with the sin and brokenness that I see in my life and the world around me...*

Lie: God is NOT good all the time

Truth: "The Lord is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works." -- Psalm 145:9

Other verses: Exodus 34:6; 1 Chronicles 16:34; Psalm 23:6; Mark 10:17-18; Psalm 34:8-10; Psalm 92:15; Nahum 1:7; Psalm 31:19-20

Lie: God's grace is NOT sufficient for my forgiveness

Truth: "For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." – 2 Corinthians 5:21

Other verses: Isaiah 1:18; Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 5:1-2; Galatians 2:15-21; 1 Peter 1:13-21; 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

Lie: God is NOT perfect in wisdom, justice and mercy

Truth: "In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and on earth." -- Ephesians 1:5-10

Other verses: Colossians 2:2-3; James 1:5; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Psalm 86:5; 1 Peter 1:3

Lie: God is withholding something good from me.

Truth: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." -- Romans 8:28-29

Other verses: Jeremiah 29:11; Isaiah 49:13; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; James 1:12; Matthew 9:35-38, 14:13-21; Psalm 84:11

Lie: God doesn't understand what I am going through or care about my suffering

Truth: "When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." -- Psalm 34:17-18

Other verses: Hebrews 4:14-16; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Isaiah 49:15-16

Lie: God's Word can't really help me in my time of need

Truth: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." -- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Other verses: 1 Peter 1:3-8; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Lie: God is NOT trustworthy

Truth: "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether." -- Psalm 19: 7-9

Other verses: Jeremiah 17:7-8; Psalm 18:30, 91 and 111:7; 2 Samuel 7:28

Lie: I need to gain God's favor before I can come to Him

Truth: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ -- by grace you have been saved -- and raised up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." -- Ephesians 2:4-10

Other verses: Romans 8:1-11; Isaiah 64:6; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10

Day 6: Thanksgiving and Supplication

An important aspect of supplication that glorifies God is having a heart of thanksgiving. We are only able to effectively pray for one another and for the kingdom when we are growing in humility and gratitude. Pray for God to help you see how you need to grow in thankfulness in order to glorify Him in your prayer life.

How have you been challenged to grow in gratitude over the last few days?

What is something that you are grateful for right now?

Meditate on and praise Jesus for his humility (Phil. 2:5-11) that enables you to be humble.

What are some practical steps you can be taking in the next week to grow in humility and contentment?

A lack of thanksgiving often leads to selfishness in our prayer requests. Consider the following:

How do you struggle to put God's desires first in your life and your prayers?

One way that we can glorify God in prayer is by thanking Him for saving us from being dead in sin and seeking wisdom in how to live for and pray for the coming of His Kingdom. Ask God to help you grow in understanding His Kingdom work and how He wants you to be involved.

What is one way that you can start praying for and living for the kingdom this week?

Day 7: Bringing It All Together

Growing in Adoration:

When prayer is focused on God and learning more about Him it should lead to adoration. Spend time praising God for His unchanging goodness, holiness, mercy, justice and wisdom. Praying through Scripture can point us to the truth of who God is and help us grow in our desire to know Him and worship Him.

Be diligent in seeking the Lord and pray for Him to reveal areas of unbelief that you may not see in your heart. Seek out Scripture to address lies you may be believing about God and meditate on the truth in the Word.

Being quick to Confess:

Confession starts with putting on humility and remembering our great need for a Savior. Not only are we called to confess our sins to the Lord, but in James 5:16 we see that we are called to confess our sins to one another, that we may be healed.

One of the main ways we can come alongside one another and hold each other accountable is through Small Groups. How do you need to grow in being actively involved in a Small Group or an accountability relationship?

Ask God to help you address any fears you may have about being transparent with your family in Christ. Meditate on the Gospel and remember that we are all equal at the foot of the cross.

Cultivating a Thankful Heart:

Growing in contentment involves finding joy in the unchanging goodness of God and not letting our emotions be controlled by our circumstances. Continue seeking God and ask Him to help you see where you aren't deeply satisfied with His will.

We are called to "give thanks in all circumstances," because it is God's will for us in Christ Jesus (1 Thess. 5:18). What prevents you from giving thanks in all circumstances?

Pray for God to help you put on the truth and grow in thankfulness.

Supplication that glorifies God:

Prayer that is focused on God's desires and glory above our own.

In Matthew 6:5-15 Jesus is teaching the disciples how to pray. This prayer will be familiar to many, but it is important to see what God is teaching us about prayer. In verse 9 we see the biblical basis for corporate prayer, when Jesus tells them to pray "Our Father".

How do you need to grow in being involved with corporate prayer? What are some stumbling blocks that you may need to address that keep you from praying corporately?

What is one area of praying for the Kingdom that you want to grow in?