



# **SUNDAY SCHOOL MINISTRY**

## **Discipleship Plan**

**Year Four  
Third Quarter – Part 2  
Prayer**

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## Second Quarter – Prayer

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## Lesson Five: The Lord's Prayer

**Primary Verses:** "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:14-16 (NKJV)

**Teaching Text:** John 17

**Supporting Texts:** Luke 22:31-34

Historically, and for the sake of tradition, it has been passed down that the words of Christ found in Luke 11:2-4 and its expanded version in Matthew 6:9-13 are "the Lord's Prayer." No believer disputes the Lord actually said these words and all the faithful understand this prayer was taught to the earliest disciples by the Lord. But with a phrase in the prayer like, "forgive **us our** trespasses," it is clear the sinless Savior would not, nor could He ever offer up, such a petition.

We are blessed, however, to know what petitions our "great High Priest" did offer up during His earthly ministry. John 17 is the authoritative passage that outlines not only what Jesus prayed for, but those verses also set our expectation for what we can be assured Jesus still prays for with respect to all who would believe in Him through the message of the apostles.

**Questions to Consider:** How many times does the word/root "glory" appear in John 17? Is it valuable to take note of repetition of certain words in scripture like this? Why or why not? How might such repetition help us to understand the mindset of Christ as He approached the cross? How does this passage shed light on the Trinity and your understanding of who Jesus is? Does John 17:3 expand or challenge your comprehension of "eternal life?" When praying for the Eleven, what are Jesus' priorities? What does He specifically request of the Father on their behalf? Consider verse 9 in contrast with verse 20. How does the knowledge of who Christ prays for and doesn't pray for affect your confidence in prayer? Does it affect how you view evangelistic efforts and plans for discipleship? If you are in Christ, how can this prayer shape your thoughts and/or hopes for your personal sanctification?

**Challenging the Class:** When you end your prayer "in Jesus' name," do you really remember and focus on how Jesus Himself prayed for you? If you've never considered it, it's time to meditate and seek God so that you may truly understand whether you are using the privilege of praying in His name properly.

**This Week's "I Will" Challenge:** The Lord's Prayer of John 17 was offered up while the shadow of Calvary's Cross, just hours away, loomed large on Jesus' mind. Let us consider Christ and what He was willing to give despite the great cost at His expense. We are challenged this week to "give generously"—and we can do it if we, like Christ, look past ourselves and see the good others will reap when we honor God by giving of our time, talent, and treasure sacrificially.

## Lesson Six: Praying for Others

**Primary Verses:** “I always thank my God for you because of His grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in Him you have been enriched in every way with all kinds of speech and all knowledge, God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 1:4-8 (NIV)

**Teaching Text:** Ephesians 3:14-21

**Supporting Texts:** 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; Ephesians 6:18-19; Philippians 1:1-11

Would prayer be easier if it was simply a wish list? Probably not. Why? Because everything involved with a wish list still entails prayer: articulation of desire, considering the one you present the list to as able to supply the wishes, making the actual request, recognizing the fulfillment of the wishes is strongly linked to our closeness to the one we’re asking wishes of, etc. Refusing a child’s string of (often) fool-hardy requests is one thing, but how do we know what is best to pray for when praying for one another?

In an eight-week study on prayer, the entire time could have been exhausted on the prayers of Christ and related teachings from His earthly ministry. Of course, virtually the same could be said of the prayers of Paul found in many of his epistles. These prayers are a treasure trove of insights into gospel-rich, theocentric (God-centered), Spirit-filled patterns of prayer for anyone who wants to dive into them. Consider the following commentary on Ephesians 6:18-19:

“The exhortation to ‘watch and pray’ was part of early Christian tradition which derives from the teaching of Jesus, who encouraged his disciples to be vigilant in the light of temptation and in view of his unexpected return. Here Paul is not simply describing believers’ general stance of being watchful and prayerful at all times. Nor is he speaking of attention and engagement in prayer as opposed to humdrum and lethargic praying... Here believers are to persevere so as to overcome fatigue and discouragement, and not to fall into spiritual sleep or complacency.”—Peter T. Obrien, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary, Letter to the Ephesians*, pg. 485.

The call to pray is one that *must* be answered by **every** Christian. If the Apostle Paul could request prayer, we should not shrink away from asking others to pray for him, neither should we neglect our duty to pray for one another.

**Questions to Consider:** (Ephesians 3:14-21) Paul says that he “kneels before the Father.” Does this picture square up well with your idea of or experience with a father/father figure? How should a Christian understand this phrase? One could cheapen the prayer and say “Paul is praying for their spiritual growth.” But how many separate requests does Paul actually make in this prayer?

**This Week’s “I Will” Challenge:** Praying for one another will help keep church members from dropping out. Being “rooted and grounded in love” will lead us to care for other members beyond the superficial and God’s strength will keep us from being burned out. Pray that none become “weary in well-doing” (Galatians 6:9)!

## Lesson Seven: Prayer and Work

**Primary Verses:** “So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its heights, for the people had a mind to work. But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.” Nehemiah 4:6-9 (ESV)

**Teaching Text:** Nehemiah 4

**Supporting Texts:** Nehemiah 1-3 (recap and background)

*“Prayer doesn’t work. Perhaps it makes the believer feel better (in the same way that meditation or deep thought would), but prayer doesn’t actually affect the external world. Not only is it ineffective, but it is also a very narcissistic practice... why would a 'God' change its 'Divine Plan' to accommodate any person’s wishes?”* –David G. McAfee, atheist, author of The Belief Book

How do we respond to the atheistic attack on prayer as laid out above? As is the case with many non-believers, we are forced to address the fact that many have their own idea of what a Christian believes and are more than happy to attack that idea rather than the actual article of faith. In other words, when the non-believer sets up a “strawman” or false doctrine and merely *calls* it Christian, we should not be upset or frustrated but should take the opportunity to expose the falsehood and then present the facts.

Prayer is not about a feeling but more about communication. Neither do we believe that prayer “works” simply by our saying words but prayer “works” because GOD is at work through our prayers. Nor do we believe that God has altered his decree due to our prayers. Rather, God has decreed that the prayers of the faithful should be in conjunction with the working out of His will. Finally, prayer is not a substitute for human activity but is the natural outgrowth of a belief that the created depends upon the Creator for all things. We do not negate the necessity of human action, but we do affirm the ultimate futility of man’s efforts without God’s engagement and authorization.

## Lesson Eight: Postures of Prayer

**Primary Verses:** “In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.” Hebrews 5:7-8

**Teaching Text:** Various

**Supporting Texts:** Colossians 4:2 (NASB)

There is much to be said and attention given in what is *said* during prayer (and rightfully so!). However, not much consideration is given to the posture of prayer. To consider the posture of prayer is not about what we pray but rather *how* the posture/position of our bodies reflect the attitude of our prayer. Often, the posture of our prayer is assumed or learned through what we see others do...but what does Scripture say about different postures of prayer? It is important to consider what Scripture says about how we are to pray. As a note, we are nowhere commanded in Scripture to always pray in a certain posture; however, different postures can have different meanings and remind us not to be stagnant in our prayers, but instead, approach the presence of God with a fresh heart, eager to make our petitions known with gladness.

**Standing (Genesis 24:12-14):** In this narrative account, Abraham’s servant prays to God standing on the authority of Abraham. He refers to God as “LORD, God of my master.” The servant rightly observes that standing in the presence of a King means you had to have the legal right to be there. Thankfully for us believers, when we pray we understand that we stand **IN** Christ, Who by His sacrifice has given us a legal right to petition to the Father (**Romans 5:1-2**). Since we stand in this position in Christ this posture also symbolizes a reminder to stand on behalf of someone who may not have the listening ear of God in prayer (Exodus 32:9-14).

**Bowing (Exodus 34:8):** Here Moses literally stands in the presence of the LORD (vs.5) who came proclaiming His own name. Moses then bows and worships the LORD before Him. In different cultures, it is appropriate to bow for a dignitary. Bowing is a sign of great respect and honor of their position. In this way, bowing honors the person and authority of God. Bowing displays reverence for God and meekness of the petitioner (**Matthew 5:5, Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth**).

**Kneeling (Mark 1:40):** In the Gospels, most people knelt before Jesus to ask a request of Him (Matthew 17:14, Matthew 20:20). Kneeling is a sign of dependence (Psalm 95:6) and pleading to the LORD to do what we are incapable of (Ephesians 3:14-19). Specifically, kneeling shows an earnest appeal in the area of salvation, which was impossible for us to achieve on our own (Mark 1:40).

**Lifted Hands (1 Timothy 2:8):** Similar to the peaceful tactics of “hands up,” Paul urges men to lift up hands in unity and harmony instead of strife. Unclenched hands are not ready for war, but instead stretch upward as to submit to and receive blessings from God and ultimately His mercy.

**Prostrate (Job 1:20-21):** Upon hearing the devastating news of losing his wealth and children, Job’s first reaction was to fall and literally worship God in prayer (Exodus 34:8). What a powerful model of how we should deal with suffering in our lives. Falling before Him recognizes God’s overwhelming worthiness while also acknowledging our unworthiness before Him and helplessness without Him (Genesis 17:3).