

Steve Whitacre
SESSION 2 | LEARNING PRAYER

Our Recommended Text

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God by Timothy Keller (Dutton)

Class Overview

Week One: What Is Prayer? | Chapters 3-5
Week Two: Learning Prayer | Chapters 6-9
Week Three: Deepening Prayer | Chapters 10-11
Week Four: Doing Prayer | Chapters 12-15

Additional Recommended Reading

- *Take Words with You* by Tim Kerr
- *Praying the Lord's Prayer* by J.I. Packer (Crossway)
- *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* by D.A. Carson (Inter Varsity Press)
- *The Valley of Vision* (Banner of Truth)
- *The Message of Prayer* by Timothy Chester (Inter Varsity Press)
- *Heart Aflame: Daily Readings from Calvin on the Psalms* (P&R)

What are our obstacles to prayer?

“Prayer is the conversation of friends. It is not a mere convenience for letting God what know we are thinking or what we want. Prayer is that for which we were made. It is at the heart of God’s plan of salvation ... to be a Christian and to pray mean the same thing, and not a thing which can be left to our own wayward impulses.”¹

I. How Not to Pray

A. Beware the show-off prayer

B. Beware the autopilot prayer

¹ Timothy Chester, *The Message of Prayer* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 27.

II. How to Pray: Addressing God

“Very striking is Jesus’ use of pronouns with ‘Father.’ When forgiveness of sins is discussed, Jesus speaks of ‘your Father’ and excludes himself. When he speaks of his unique sonship and authority, he speaks of ‘my Father’ and excludes others. The ‘our Father’ at the beginning of this model prayer is plural but does not include Jesus, since it is part of his instruction regarding what his disciples should pray.”²

III. How to Pray: Praying for God’s Glory

A. Hallowed Be Your Name

“To ‘hallow’ God’s name is not merely to live righteous lives but to have a heart of grateful joy toward God—and even more, a wondrous sense of his beauty.”³

B. Your Kingdom Come

“‘Your kingdom come’ calls upon God to act in a decisive fashion to end the ambiguity of the world’s sin and confusion ... this is not a request to God to *help us* to implement the kingdom, but plainly asks for the coming of the kingdom that only God can bring.”⁴

C. Your Will Be Done On Earth As It Is In Heaven

“I cannot sincerely ask for the doing of God’s will without denying myself, for when we get down to the business of everyday living, we regularly find that it is our will rather than his that we want to do, or to see happening. Nor can I pray this prayer without dedicating myself to keep local to God in face of all the opposition that in this fallen world, where Satan is “prince,” I regularly meet.”⁵

IV. How to Pray: Praying for Our Good

A. Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

² D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 169.

³ Timothy Keller, *Prayer* (New York: Dutton, 2014), 111.

⁴ Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, 162.

⁵ J. I. Packer, *Praying the Lord’s Prayer* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 58.

B. Forgive Us Our Debts As We Also Have Forgiven Our Debtors

“Those who hope for God’s forgiveness, said Jesus, must be able to tell him that they too have forgiven their debtors. This is not a matter of learning forgiveness by words, but of qualifying for it by repentance. Repentance—change of mind—makes mercy and forbearance central to one’s new lifestyle.”⁶

C. Lead Us Not Into Temptation But Deliver Us From Evil

V. Learning to Pray By Praying

“I believe that when we cannot pray, it is time that we prayed more than ever. And if you answer, “But how can that be?” I would say, pray to pray. Pray for prayer. Pray for the spirit of supplication. Do not be content to say, “I would pray if I could.” No, but if you cannot pray, pray till you can.”⁷

“I am at last convinced that it is better for me to do something for God, though it be imperfect, than to be guilty of perpetual delays in hopes of better pleasing myself.”⁸

⁶ Packer, *Praying the Lord’s Prayer*, 81.

⁷ Charles Spurgeon, source uncertain.

⁸ Isaac Watts, *A Guide to Prayer*, (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2001), 5.

APPENDIX: A CHECKLIST OF THE MAIN ITEMS INVOLVED⁹

Do you identify with the trust in Jesus Christ as your own Savior, and the faith in God as your own God through him, and the recognition of every Christian as your own brother in God's family, that is expressed by "Our Father"?

Is the hallowing of God's name in and through you, whatever that may cost, your own controlling purpose in life? Do you want to see God triumph in his kingdom, and to see everything that does not match his perfection come to an end?

Will you labor and suffer diligently for the kingdom, if need be, so as to become its agent, the means of bringing it into lives and situations where the gates have been locked against God?

Do you happily take God's will of command for your rule, and God's will of events for your destiny, knowing (by faith) that both are supremely good?

Is there any matter in which you are flying in the face of God's will of command, excusing yourself on the grounds of there being other commands that you faithfully keep? If so, what will you now do about it?

Do you see and know that unless God acts to provide for today's needs, and to pardon today's sins, and to protect you in today's temptations, you are lost?

Do you make it an issue of conscience never to bear a grudge or cherish bitterness against anyone, but to show forgiving mercy always, because of the forgiving mercy that God always shows you?

Is there any person whom hitherto you have refused to forgive for what he or she did to you? Will you ask the Lord this moment to help you change your attitude, and get right with that person?

Do you make it your habit to watch and pray against temptation? Will you make it your habit from now on?

Is the Lord's Prayer really in your heart? Are you being honest when you say "amen" to it? "O God, make clean our hearts within us; and take not thy Holy Spirit from us." Lord, teach me how to pray, by teaching me how to live; for Jesus' sake; *amen*.

⁹ From Packer, *Praying the Lord's Prayer*, 119-20.