

INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER: COMMUNING WITH THE TRIUNE GOD

THE MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

“Some churches now advertise courses on how to pray. How ridiculous!
That is like giving a course on how to fall in love.” — A. W. Tozer

I. CLASS INFORMATION:

First Class Session (In Person): Saturday, February 2, 2019

9:00–11:00am (Pacific Standard Time)

His Place Church

3079 E. 16th Ave.

Post Falls, ID 83854

Weekly Class Sessions (Online): Thursdays, February 6 – March 20, 2019

6:40–8:10pm (Pacific Standard Time)

Direct Link to Zoom Conference Call: TBD

Class Landing Page: TBD

Facilitator from His Place Church:

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II. DESCRIPTION:

Learning to pray is the proper starting point for the study of theology. As Evagrius Ponticus, the fourth-century Christian writer, said: “He who prays truly is a theologian; he who is a theologian prays truly.” This conclusion is echoed in modern statements such as: “We must learn to speak *to* God before we can learn to speak *about* God.” This

class is the first in the *Certificate in Christian Ministry* and the *Certificate in Prayer* programs of study.

This class is designed to give students a basic introduction to the history, theology, and practice of prayer in the Christian tradition. In the first class session, we will learn the inspiring story of the role prayer played in the revivals since the First Great Awakening in the mid-eighteenth century. Subsequent class sessions explore the theological framework of prayer, survey the liturgies of the ancient and medieval church and the prayer books of the Reformation traditions, and study the prayers of the Bible as a pattern for our own prayers. Following this class, students will be able to evaluate the dynamics and health of their personal prayer lives and be prepared to lead corporate prayer services.

III. OBJECTIVES:

- The student will survey and discuss the major Old and New Testament texts concerning prayer.
- The student will gain an understanding of the pivotal nature of prayer in church history and particularly the role of prayer in the history of revival.
- The student will develop an appreciation for the role of prayer in spiritual formation and know the value of prayer for individual and communal spiritual health.
- The student will be able to construct a private or corporate prayer service using a variety of prayer methods, including praying through Scripture via the *Lectio Divina* method.
- The student will gain practical experience in seeking Christian unity in prayer.

IV. PROCEDURES:

The first class period will be conducted as a live event at His Place Church in Post Falls. The first class period will be two hours in length. This opening class period may be advertised as a public lecture or may serve as an outreach tool for the church into the broader community.

Subsequent class periods will be conducted as online meetings, each of which will be 90 minutes in length. The first 45 minutes of each of these subsequent class periods will be dedicated to new lecture material. Following a 10-minute break, the final 35 minutes of each of these class periods will be dedicated to discussing the course textbook.

V. TEXTBOOK (FOR PURCHASE):

Keller, Timothy. *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. New York: Penguin, 2016.

VI. CLASS SCHEDULE:

Date:	Place and Time:	Subject:	Readings and Assignments:
Saturday, February 2, 2019	His Place Church, 9:00–11:00am (PST)	Prayer in the History of Revival: From the Great Awakening to the Present	
Thursday, February 7, 2019	Online, 6:40–8:10pm (PST)	Theology of Prayer	Keller, <i>Prayer</i> , Part 1: Desiring Prayer Introduction (pp. 1–5) Ch. 1: The Necessity of Prayer (pp. 9–18) Ch. 2: The Greatness of Prayer (pp. 19–32)
Thursday, February 14, 2019	Online, 6:40–8:10pm (PST)	All the Prayers of the Bible	Keller, <i>Prayer</i> , Part 2: Understanding Prayer Ch. 3: What Is Prayer? (pp. 35–49) Ch. 4: Conversing with God (pp. 50–65)
Thursday, February 21, 2019	Online, 6:40–8:10pm (PST)	<i>Lectio Divina</i> : Praying the Scriptures	Ch. 5: Encountering God (pp. 66–80) Keller, <i>Prayer</i> , Part 3: Learning Prayer Ch. 6: Letter on Prayer (pp. 83–96) Ch. 7: Rules for Prayer (pp. 97–107)
Thursday, February 28, 2019	Online, 6:40–8:10pm (PST)	<i>The Common Book of Prayer</i> (Collects)	Ch. 8: The Prayers of Prayers (pp. 108–119) Ch. 9: The Touchstones of Prayer (pp. 120–142)
Thursday, March 7, 2019	Online, 6:40–8:10pm (PST)	Prayer Books and Writing Public Prayers	Keller, <i>Prayer</i> , Part 4: Deepening Prayer Ch. 10: As Conversation: Meditating on His Word (pp. 145–164) Ch. 11: As Encounter: Seeking His Face (pp. 165–186)
Thursday, March 14, 2019	Online, 6:40–8:10pm (PST)	Incorporating Praise into Our Prayers	Keller, <i>Prayer</i> , Part 5: Doing Prayer Ch. 12: Awe: Praising His Glory (pp. 189–204) Ch. 13: Intimacy: Finding His Grace (pp. 205–221)

Thursday, March 21, 2019	Online, 6:40– 8:10pm (PST)	Personal Prayer Ministry: Intercessory Prayer	Ch. 14: Struggle: Asking His Help (pp. 222– 239) Ch. 15: Practice: Daily Prayer (pp. 240–262)
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VII. ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. *Attendance*. In the case that a student is not able to be present for a class session, we recommend that (1) the student notify the class facilitator by email concerning the anticipated or past absence, and (2) the student review the video recording of the class session online before the next class session. Video recordings of each online class session will be created and uploaded to the class landing page.
- B. *Reading*. There are reading assignments for each of the 5 class sessions following the first class session. Students are expected to read the assigned sections of the textbook prior to the start of the class in which they will be discussed. Quizzes will be administered at the start of each online class session in order to monitor the class's level of reading comprehension.
- C. *Reflective Essay*. Each student in the course is to write a reflective essay of 1500–2500 words in length and to submit this essay to the class instructor by email prior to the final class session (March 20, 2019). The reflective essay should follow one of the following tracks:
- i. *Track 1: Book Review*. Maybe you're the kind of reader who likes to take copious notes. This assignment is designed to allow you to invest extra time with the class textbook. In your reflective essay, spend the first 50% or so of the total word count reporting on the overall themes of the book, and then spend the next 50% of your essay describing the strengths and weaknesses of the book from your perspective.
 - ii. *Track 2: Prayer Journal*. Documenting what and when we prayed can be a powerful practice to help us learn to improve and focus our prayer lives. Document your prayer life for the five weeks between the first and final class sessions. Write at least 3 journal entries per week.
 - iii. *Track 3: Letters to Yourself on Prayer*. C. S. Lewis famously published his thoughts on prayer as a series of letters between two imaginary friends. Imagine that you are writing letters to yourself as your own spiritual director. Write a series of short letters guiding yourself to pray in a more intimate, more focused, more biblical manner.

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY (FOR REFERENCE):

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- Brother Lawrence. *The Practice of the Presence of God*. New York: Revell, 1977.
- Butts, David. *Forgotten Power: A Simple Theology for a Praying Church*. Terre Haute: PrayerShop Publishing, 2015.
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- Willard, Dallas. *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- Unknown Christian. *The Kneeling Christian*. New York: Harpercollins, 1969.
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