

# Lesson 4

Teacher's Manual

## HOW TO PRAY

subject matter:  
Learning the basics  
of communicating  
with God

READ & MEDITATE ON: Luke 11:1-13

MEMORIZE: Philippians 4:6-7

### INTRODUCTION

Would you like to talk with God? Do you desire God to speak to you?

In this lesson you will learn to pray! The world can be changed through prayer. When we pray, the power, revelation and strength of God become ours. You can become an important part of God's plan in the last days--if you are willing to pray.

"As for me, I will call upon God and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice."

*Psalms 55:16-17*

First of all, establish this one mental consideration: choose to pray. This is something only you can do. Your decision to pray and your praying will bring glory to God and blessings to yourself and others. That decision, when carried out, will make you one of the most important people in the world, doing the most important job in the world.

#### I. COMMUNICATING WITH GOD THROUGH PRAYER

What happens to you when you have been alone for a few days, surrounded by meaningless noise but no one to talk with? If you are like most people, you begin to develop a craving to speak with someone, anyone, about anything. The most frequent complaint of those who travel and are forced to be alone, is that they experience a need to talk with someone. Such a person will pick conversation with almost anyone; just to satisfy the need. Many who are unable to develop the skill of conversation often change jobs rather than face this terrible ordeal of loneliness.

be organized. God is not opposed to planning and order. (I Corinthians 14:40.) Few people will succeed in praying unless they set aside a planned time to pray.

In establishing the best time for your daily prayer, give consideration to your personal life style. Do not try to do like someone else. If you are a night person, then perhaps late at night would be best. Or, if you are an early riser, early in the morning. By now you have developed certain patterns of living, so adjust an organized prayer time to fit into your natural inclinations. An organized time, free of interruptions, will be one of your best assets in prayer.

#### B. Find A Place

It might help you to establish in your home a place of prayer. Luke 11:1 mentions that our Lord was praying in a "certain place." This might suggest that he enjoyed a specific place for prayer. Many experienced pray-ers do recommend a certain place. Try to find a secret place, a "closet" where you can get alone before God. (One can conceivably be "alone" when others are around by closing the "doors" of their mind through concentration.) However, praying itself is the important thing. An unused prayer room is of no value whatsoever.

In the Bible, prayer was conducted in all types of unusual places: altars of animals, walking in open fields, at the well, while wrestling, in chains, on an ash pile, in the belly of a fish, standing in a river, in a wilderness, at a grave, on a cross, in a dungeon, in a shipwreck, and under an altar. So you can see that where you pray is not nearly as important as praying itself.

#### C. Find An Objective

Not only should your prayer be systematic with regard to time and place, but it should also be specific. Praying with an objective is one of the keys to answered prayer. In Isaiah 41:21, God challenges us to be specific: "Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob." Learning to pray specifically will make a difference in how you feel about prayer and will bring results from prayer. Know what the needs are and bring them to God. Know His will and pray within it. God promises to give us the desires of our hearts but waits for us to specify our desires to Him. Vague, general utterings will never lead to victory but specific petitions expressed "boldly" will invite the power and influence of God's Spirit. Remember: You are not a beggar! You have been invited to "ask" of Him and participate in performing His spiritual business in the world and in your life!

Praise is the way to higher ground. Isaiah states, "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of thy Father Jacob: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isaiah 58:14). Praise unleashes you from yourself. In praise we give recognition to God's nature. Praise is a sacrifice, (Psalms 141:2, Hebrews 13:15), a vocal exultation of God's nature and virtues. Prayer begins with praise. (Psalms 63:3.)

## 2. Forgiveness

Since prayer will include your own confessions and petition for forgiveness you should take care to forgive those who are your debtors. Jesus makes it clear that for one to expect forgiveness of his own sins and failings, he must be willing to forgive others. Nothing will block your spiritual progress more fatally than an unforgiving spirit. (Mark 11:25-26.)

## 3. Confession

As you can see, in the early stage of the "Complete Prayer," we deal with sin. First, sin against you and now your own sins. David asked God to search his heart for any unconfessed sin. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24). The old trains, running in early America across wilderness lines, had a cow catcher on the front of the engine. This served to push animals or limbs from the track, permitting the train to follow through. Confession is your cow catcher in prayer. It clears the way for powerful praying. Do not try prayer without it. A person unwilling to confess will never know the joy of prayer.

*wicked =  
idol  
displeas.  
anything  
contrary to  
God.*

## 4. Petition

"...Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss..." (James 4:2-3). This aspect of prayer deals with our personal needs. Feel confident to pray for your personal needs. Jesus wants you to do it; and His heart is open to your needs. Petition is also included in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).

throughout your prayer, plan to spend a special period in thanking God out loud for all things in your life. (Philippians 4:6.)

9. Pray The Word

The Word of God is brought into prayer twice. A brief period of reading the Word is first. However, now you "Pray the Word." In this aspect of praying; you bring the scripture right into your prayer. Once you learn this technique, it will be a tremendous blessing to your prayer life. Here is an example of how to do this: First, select a scripture. Let us choose Ephesians 1:17-19. In this portion of scripture Paul prays for the church at Ephesus; "That...God...may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." That is a wonderful request. Make it yours. Pray it from off the page of your Bible; "Lord, give me the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of you." Then Paul prays, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling..." Again, respond to those very words: "Lord, enlighten my eyes that I may know the hope of your calling." Personalize it! The method is easy to grasp. As you begin, two important things will happen: (1) You will be praying for and receiving the great things the Word of God has provided, and (2) You will be placing the Word in your heart.

10. Singing

One aspect of prayer is singing "new songs" unto the Lord. Singing refreshes and comforts the soul, and one of the greatest thrills of singing is to sing, in the Holy Ghost, a new song during prayer. "Speaking to yourself in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord..." (Ephesians 5:19).

11. Listening

Prayer is not all talking to God, it also involves listening. Listening, to many, is a lost art. However, in our prayers we must establish good listening habits. God speaks in the "still small voice" (I Kings 19:11-12), to those who pray. Remember, listening is different from meditation. When we listen we receive direct orders from God's Spirit. Make certain that your praying includes listening.

in your life. You may never totally understand prayer or how it works, but do not let that keep you from praying. Prayer is not a human concept, it is a divine concept. It is not based on human laws and principles, but it is based on God's principles and laws. The mystery of prayer is a wonderful thing to contemplate, but just because you may not fully understand prayer, never let that keep you from praying.

You are, by the new birth, a son of God. You have been invited to pray and promised answers. Do not let Satan lie to you or make you feel that you have no right to pray.

Do not question the value of prayer. Often when the pastor or spiritual advisor says, "We'll pray about it," the troubled person often thinks it is a put-off. If the human, or carnal solution seems more important to you, then you will naturally have trouble in prayer. View prayer as a valuable solution.

## 2. Failure To Ask

*practical makes perfect* } Of course most people's problem in prayer is simply that they do not pray. Nothing will help you pray more than praying. When one fails to pray he does not develop the proper techniques in prayer or the real value of prayer. One of the ways to overcome problems in prayer is simply to pray. "Ask and it shall be given you..." (Matthew 7:7).

When you pray, ask positively. Ask for things, pray for victory, pray for souls. Do not say, "Lord, I know you are not going to hear me," or, "Lord, I know you are not going to bless me." These statements will not serve you well. Pray positively! God has invited you to pray. You are His guest in the throne room. You have come to Him by invitation. Ask boldly and earnestly, but never pray negatively.

## 3. Laziness

Most people could do much better in their lives if they would work harder. We don't like to hear it sometimes but it is true. Basically most of us are lazy. Laziness keeps most people from praying and you can be sure that laziness will keep you from praying, perhaps more than any other thing. Resist the temptation to put prayer off because you are tired or feel weary. Often just a couple of minutes into prayer and you will feel rested immediately.

at that particular moment. It may, at first, seem negative to you but when God answers us He answers as a father responding to a son. He answers in our favor and for our benefit. Never fear responding to God's direction and assistance in your life.

## B. Hindrances to Prayer

### 1. Wrong Motives (James 4:3)

Asking amiss or for the wrong thing and for the wrong reason is a sure way of failing in praying. We must pray within the realm of God's will. Remember, God never answers prayers outside of His own divine will or the truth of His Word. When you pray, for whatever you are praying, your motive must be pure.

### 2. Sin in Our Hearts (Psalms 66:18)

Sin separates men from God. Sin hinders prayer. One should be careful to search their heart diligently every time they kneel to pray. Make certain that every sin has been confessed and placed under the forgiving grace of Jesus Christ. Sin in your heart will hinder your prayer.

### 3. Idols in Our Lives (Ezekiel 14:3)

There is one God. That one God Jehovah must be the God and only God of your life. Anything that you place ahead of God, whether it is people or possessions or whatever, becomes in a sense, a God to you. Idols are a hindrance to prayer. Put God first and keep Him first in your life.

### 4. An Unforgiving Spirit (Mark 11:25)

One of the aspects of prayer is forgiveness. We must forgive others before we can expect God to forgive us. An unforgiving spirit is a hindrance to prayer. Never allow the slightest root of bitterness.

### 5. Lack of Generosity (Proverbs 21:13)

A giving, generous person is one who represents, in each area of his life, a willingness to share and a willingness to even be inconvenienced for the sake of helping others or for the work of God. This is the kind of attitude that God loves. When one is missing a spirit of generosity, he hinders his own prayer life.

6. Mistreatment of Family (I Peter 3:7)

The guilt that is associated with the mistreatment of one's family is overwhelming. You will never be able to pray through the guilt that comes when you mistreat your family. Kindness and charity must first be expressed in one's own family. God observes how you treat your family. His blessings, in many regards, will be based on your attitude toward your family. Nothing is a greater hindrance to prayer, than trying to pray shortly after you have had a serious argument with your wife or children. You will probably find it impossible. Constantly work on your relationship with your family. Treat them right and with love, and God will honor you for this.

7. Unbelief (Matthew 9:29)

When one calls upon the name of the Lord, he must believe. It is simply a waste of time to pray to a God in whom you do not believe. Belief is one of the most important ingredients in your life. We can do nothing with unbelief. Unbelief is death. Unbelief complicates and hinders, but when one believes, "all things are possible." When you pray, believe and God will answer every prayer.

In conclusion, keep in mind the fact that prayer is two-way communication with God. We can talk with the Lord anytime, anyplace, in any position and any way we feel. Above all, always remember--the only way to really learn how to pray, is to pray! The words of prayer advocate, S. D. Gordon, contain a conviction that every apostolic should have and hold. "The greatest thing anyone can do for God and man is pray. It is not the only thing but it is the chief thing. The greatest people on the earth pray. I do not mean those who talk about prayer, nor yet those who can explain about prayer; but I mean those people who take time to pray."

*comment  
Pg. 317*

#### 4. Shallow Praying

All of us have met people whose favorite saying is, "Nobody cares," or "Nobody loves me," and so on. Remember that God really does care. Thus, when you pray, pray earnestly and pray believing. Shallow, "I don't care" praying will get nowhere and you will not benefit from the time you spend in prayer at all if you pray shallowly. Pray deeply, from the bottom of your heart. Pray earnestly. God hears the sincere and earnest prayer.

#### 5. Relying On Feelings

Do not wait for an emotional binge before you pray. Pray even if you do not feel like praying. One of the problems many people have in prayer is that they wait until they feel like praying. You may go for a very, very long time and never feel like praying. Because of this, you must persist in praying and never base your prayer ministry and prayer program on your feelings. A prayer life is a life style. It is not based on emotions.

#### 6. Silent Praying

Perhaps you are a sensitive person; a shy individual. Praying aloud, however, is one of the most important factors of prayer. Some argue that until you pray aloud, you are not really speaking to God. Do not be afraid or ashamed to lift up your voice in prayer. God is waiting to hear you. What you express; what you speak with your voice, is perhaps the truest form of what you feel in your heart. (Read Exodus 33:11.)

#### 7. Failure to Respond

Another common problem in prayer is the failure to act upon the answer to prayer. When you fail to act upon God's Spirit and leading, it complicates your relationship with God. If you do not respond to one answer that God gives, why should you expect another? Surely you will fail in your prayer life by failing to act.

Facing reality and truth is one difficulty we all have at some point or the other in our life. No doubt many people fail to pray simply because they are afraid of the answer they might receive from God. God's answer, however, is always the best. It may be against what you feel is right.



## 12. Praise

We enter into prayer through the door of praise and we conclude every prayer session with praise. Again, as we conclude our praying, we exalt the nature of God. Jesus emphasized this when teaching His disciples to pray. Notice the suggested closing, "...For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen" (Matthew 6:13).

You should never feel so structured by this prayer method that you think you must put five minutes into each aspect. Relax with it and use it as an outline. Allow the Spirit to lead you. Intercession, for example, can rarely be done in five minutes. Therefore, you will allow more time for some things and less for others. It would not be unusual to spend an entire hour in praise or intercession as the Spirit directs. Your prayer hour, as you can see, is easily broken down into 12 basic aspects. As you grasp these aspects of prayer and practice them, your praying will become easier and the time will never seem long enough.

A word of caution: We say that prayer will be easy; this does not mean to imply that there is no battle over praying. Once you begin using this prayer system, it will make it easier and more meaningful for you, but when you decide to begin a personal prayer program in your life, the enemy of prayer--Satan--will begin an attack against you. Satan cares little about those who talk about prayer, but he unleashes his power against those who actually begin to do it. Be firm in your commitment to pray. Let nothing hold you back. Remember, you will not be troubled much thinking about prayer, but when you actually pray, Satan will hinder you if you will let him. Writer Samuel Chadwick sums up the importance of prayer with this statement: "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray."

## IV. PRAYER PROBLEMS

### A. Reasons For Difficulties

#### 1. Question Prayer and Its Value

It is not important that you understand prayer completely. Great minds, since the beginning of time, have wondered about the tremendous mystery of prayer. Suffice it to say that prayer works. Prayer will make a difference

## 5. Intercession

Now center your prayer on intercession for the lost and dying world. All around you are people with desperate needs. Intercession is praying for the lost and involves the most intense dimension of prayer. You can expect the power of God to be released through this form of prayer. Intercession is love: God's love flowing through us. Author Andrew Murray says, "God's intense longing to bless seems in some sense to be graciously limited by His dependence on intercession. God regards intercession as the highest expression of His people's readiness to receive and yield themselves wholly to the working of His Almighty Power." Intercession is the crying of the heart for souls, and mysteriously God has made Himself dependent upon our prayers. Whereas petition involves things, intercession involves souls. Intercession is working with God in the job of redeeming others. In this work as in no other, "...we are laborers together with God..." (I Corinthians 3:9).

*intercession =  
to come between,  
to entreat or ask  
the Lord  
earnestly for.*

## 6. Read The Bible

It may surprise you to hear the suggestion that you should read your Bible during prayer. However, the Word is enlightening to the eyes. (Psalms 19:9.) When you read the Bible, new possibilities are made clear. Although prayer time must not become study time, a brief moment of scripture is vital to complete prayer.

## 7. Meditation

When one meditates on God, his mind is very active. In meditation you ponder on the spiritual themes of God's Word and Spirit. Note God's Word to Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8). By meditating, you will experience a rich understanding into the depth and beauty of God's promises. This understanding will broaden and expand your praying as well as your entire life.

*meditate =  
to speak, study,  
or talk in  
praise*

## 8. Thanksgiving

In praise you exalt the virtues of God. In thanksgiving you express thanks for the specific things He has done in your life. Although thanksgiving should be sprinkled

### ✓ III. COMPLETE PRAYER

Equally important to being "systematic," is that your prayer be "complete." The complete prayer is the second absolute of prayer. First, systematic praying; now, complete praying. A complete prayer is one that involves all the aspects of praying. In short, understanding what you are to do in prayer. Many sincere people kneel to pray without any idea of what they are to do. Spiritually, of course, there is a natural flow to prayer. One may pray and never analyze the elements of prayer. What is to happen in prayer? What are you to do while praying? Once you know what to do, praying will never seem quite so difficult to you again. Before long you will be praying an hour every day...and more!

#### A. The Complete Prayer Clock

Jesus referred to an hour of prayer (Matthew 26:40). At this point we will develop a plan for a specific prayer time--an established daily prayer time--until it becomes a "ministry" in your life. For your main prayer time, think in terms of one hour. An hour of prayer can be broken up into 12 five-minute periods, basically made up of these elements: (1) Praise, (2) Forgiveness, (3) Confession, (4) Petition, (5) Intercession, (6) Reading the Bible, (7) Meditation, (8) Thanksgiving, (9) Praying the Word, (10) Singing, (11) Listening, and (12) Praise. Of course, these are very general and praying is a vast subject. There are many more aspects to it than this list suggests. However, you will find that when one prays, his prayer will almost always be composed of these elements. Thus, if you learn them and learn to use them in your praying, it will give you an understanding of what you are to do when praying. When you view praying in this sense, it becomes easy to comprehend. As you practice prayer, it will become easier and your prayer time will be a joy rather than a dreaded frustration. Now, let us break each of these aspects down to help us understand what they mean and discuss the method or techniques in using them during our prayer hour.

##### 1. Praise

The first step in prayer is praise! Praise is the backbone of our walk with God. Nothing is more exciting and beautiful than the sincere praise of praying people. "...O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psalms 22:3). Praise is one of the very purposes of prayer. More than that, it is the very purpose of spiritual life. (I Peter 2:5.)

*inhabited = continues to remain*

Now that you have become a Christian, you feel a great urge to talk with God. Even though your life is filled with friends and activity, all of this cannot fulfill the need of the soul to speak with God. Without communication with God you become lonely and fearful. You already sense in your own soul, without ever hearing a sermon of the subject or attending teaching sessions, that you must somehow speak with God. As it is natural for a baby to "desire" milk, it is natural for the born-again person to "desire" conversation with God.

Every person who has ever decided to walk with Jesus has known that they should pray, that they must pray and will often confess, "I know I need to pray more." Even the first disciples of Jesus requested of the Master, "Lord, teach us to pray..." (Luke 11:1). One who does not pray, though his life may be enriched by meaningful labor and countless friends, will soon feel like an undernourished child. Because, as the body demands food that strengthens and nourishes, the soul demands true and rich fellowship with God.

The more aware one becomes of his body and its needs, the more value he places on the kind of food he eats. The wiser or holier a man is, the greater estimate he places on prayer. Praying is longing for God. God gives to those who desire him. One can measure his own longing and thus determine how much of God's blessings he will receive. The Holy Spirit came into your life because you had faith in God and hungered after God. God responds to faith and hunger in your life. If you desire the Holy Spirit to remain strong in your heart, then you must pray. Nothing will feed your soul and give life but prayer.

What if someone would ask you, "What is the greatest thing you could do for your church"? How would you answer? Perhaps if you were rich, you could give large amounts of money. Or, if you were eloquent, you could speak the words of God with great boldness and clarity, or if you were talented musically, you could write and sing hymns. These would all be great things you could do. But the greatest thing you could do for your church, is pray. That's right, the greatest need in your church is for prayer ministers and your responsibility to pray is the most important of all! When you pray you are doing business with God. (Matthew 18:18-19.) You are transacting spiritual business and have authority to ask "whatsoever" and authority to "bind" evil spirits upon earth. A pray-er is not a beggar but a binder. Evangelism begins with prayer and your personal walk with God depends highly on prayer.

The greatest success in praying is simply to do it. However, there are some guidelines to follow. If you want to be able to maintain an active prayer life, these two things are absolute: Prayer must be "systematic" and "complete."

**PRAYER OUR REFUGE.** The story is told that Abraham Lincoln, during a particularly troubling time in his presidency, requested that his Cabinet members join him in prayer. Apparently one of the Cabinet officers thought the suggestion childish and silly. And Lincoln is said to have responded: "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go!"—Albert J. D. Walsh

## II. SYSTEMATIC PRAYER

### A. Find A Time

Remember, you have chosen to pray. Now you must decide when to pray. David said, "Evening, morning and noon will I pray." Let your prayer

7 days  
without  
prayer makes  
you WEAK