



SESSION 2

CONNECTED THROUGH PRAYER

Prayer is our response to God's constant
invitation to interact with Him.

READING PLAN

Read through the following Scripture passages this week. Use the space provided to record your thoughts and responses.

Day 1

Luke 11:1-13

Day 2

Philippians 4:4-7

Day 3

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Day 4

Ephesians 6:10-20

Day 5

James 5:13-18

Day 6

1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

Day 7

Hebrews 4:11-16

A MODEL FOR PRAYER

Throughout the Gospels God has given us Jesus as a model for prayer. Scripture shows us who Jesus prayed for, when He prayed, where He prayed, how He prayed, and why He prayed. We would be wise to look to Him as we attempt to strengthen our prayer lives.

So when and where did Jesus pray? The short answer is everywhere and anywhere. In fact, Jesus' prayers never appeared to be repetitive formulas but rather were filled with life, emotion, and rich language that evidenced Jesus' dynamic, deep, constant, and mutually interactive relationship with God the Father. Consider the variety of Jesus' interactions with God that model an anytime-and-everywhere type of prayer life for us.

We have also been invited to experience limitless interaction with God everywhere at anytime. We can interact with God while driving, cleaning, working, playing, laying down, sitting up, running, and so forth. In fact, there is no place or no time in which we cannot interact with God.

Where and when is the most natural place and time for you to interact with God regularly through prayer?

When and where do you have the opportunity to interact with God that you are not currently doing so?

Jesus began His ministry praying and ended His ministry praying from the cross. Jesus prayed in the morning, during the day, and at night. Jesus prayed in the mountains, the wilderness, the garden, and the city. It's no wonder that we've been instructed to pray constantly and everywhere.

Jesus prayed short prayers that spanned just a sentence and long prayers that spanned the entire night. No matter how short or long Jesus interacted with God, He taught us that we should never be repetitious, mistakenly thinking that the more words we use the more God will hear us. Like a relationship with the closest people in our lives, sometimes a few words are all that are needed to communicate the depths of our hearts. Other times, hours in conversation seem to pass by without labor because of the rich, enjoyable connection.

When Jesus prayed, sometimes He made requests of God. He prayed for His needs, His disciples' needs, and our needs. Jesus modeled this for us even though He taught that God already knows our needs before we ask Him. Jesus prayed for those who loved Him and those who rejected Him. Jesus gave thanks to God in His prayers for food, gave thanks for God's nature, and gave thanks that God heard His prayers.

Amid all the requests, prayers for others, and thanksgiving, Jesus trusted God obediently, even in the midst of tremendous anguish. There's no greater evidence of this than Jesus' agony in the garden of Gethsemane where He asked that God would take the cup of suffering away from Him and yet prayed, "nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Though Jesus taught against praying in public just to be seen by others, Jesus prayed in public for the good of others, teaching us that even in public prayer our focus is on God rather than those around us. But even though Jesus prayed in public, as we follow the biblical record of His prayer life, we'll also notice a recurring phrase, "Jesus withdrew." While it would be an accurate observation that Jesus prayed in both public and private, there seems to be a significance to His private prayers—prayers that none of the Gospel writers were able to record because Jesus prayed them after coming apart from the crowd and those closest to Himself.

How does the variety and scope of Jesus' interactions with God through prayer encourage you?

How does Jesus as a model for prayer challenge your current patterns of prayer?

In a world where we can be bombarded with a constant stream of external stimulation, there is a need more than ever to follow Jesus' example of withdrawing into quiet places to cultivate a relationship with God through prayer. The more often we do this, the more quickly we can free ourselves from the burdens and distractions that seek to ensnare us, and the more we will become like Jesus.

A FRAMEWORK FOR PRAYER

Let's be reminded of and dive deeper into the framework of prayer provided for us in the Lord's Prayer. Consider these elements we find in Matthew 6:9-13 as action steps to implement into your prayer life.

⁹ “Therefore, you should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
Your name be honored as holy.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And do not bring us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever. Amen.

MATTHEW 6:9-13

Remembering—“Our Father in heaven”: We begin our interaction with God acknowledging who He has revealed Himself to be. He is our Father, Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Protector, and so much more. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-sufficient. As we immerse our lives in God's Word, we can learn more about who God has revealed Himself to be.

Adoring—“Your name be honored as holy”: We continue our interaction with God acknowledging that His character and His reputation are worthy of our fully-surrendered worship. We remember God's faithfulness throughout Scripture and in our lives. We acknowledge and affirm that God is who God says He is, and we respond in worship. We value God's truth and His direction over the opinion of others.

Inviting—“Your kingdom come ... on earth as it is in heaven”: We invite God's reign and rule which is perfect in heaven to be present in our lives and in our world. We submit to God's ways as being superior to our ways.

Requesting—“Give us today our daily bread”: We ask for today’s needs. We don’t worry about tomorrow or get ahead of ourselves planning. We share the concerns we have for ourselves and others even as we acknowledge God’s sovereignty and power change people and situations according to His perfect will. We freely ask for what we want, while trusting that God in His grace and love will provide what is best for us.

Confessing/Releasing—“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”: We embrace our forgiveness through Jesus’ power over sin in our lives even as we extend forgiveness through Jesus’ power over those who have hurt us. We release our feelings of shame to God, our pain from others, and our need to condemn others.

Petitioning—“Do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”: We ask for God’s leading moving forward, a renewed focus on His design and desire for us, and protection from anything that distracts us from life with Him.

Learn from this framework of prayer and incorporate it into your prayer life. Be intentional about interacting with God in each of the areas of remembering, adoring, inviting, requesting, confessing, releasing, and petitioning.

*Which one of these elements do you have the most difficulty with?
Why do you think it is so difficult?*

Scripture refers to Jesus withdrawing Himself from potential distractions to pray. Identify a place and a time of day that you can withdraw to spend uninterrupted and focused time in order to interact with God.