

WEEK 9

HOW TO PRAY IN A LIFE
CHANGING SMALL GROUP

MODEL PRAYERS

1. Consider the prayer Jesus taught the disciples in Matthew 6:9-13 as a model prayer. According to this model, what kind of things are Jesus' disciples to ask for?

Verse 10 _____

Verse 11 _____

Verse 12 _____

Verse 13 _____

2. Read the prayer of Jesus to the Father in John 17. Not all the verses contain requests. In verse 5 Jesus made a personal request: "Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." This was a unique request that only He could pray. What did Jesus request for His disciples?

Verse 11 _____

Verse 15 _____

Verse 17 _____

Verse 21 _____

Verse 24 _____

3. Pray Ephesians 3:14-19 for a friend so that:

He/she be strengthened in the inner man (v. 16).

Christ would dwell in his/her heart through faith (v. 17).

He/she be able to comprehend the love of Christ.

He/she be filled to all the fullness of God (vv. 18-19).

4. Read another of Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1:15-23 and list at least four things he asked for:

Verse 17 _____

Verse 18 _____

Verse 19 _____

5. In the prayer for the Christians in Colossians 1:9-12, what did Paul ask for?

Verse 9 _____

Verse 10 _____

Verse 11 _____

6. In Philippians 1:9-11 Paul Prayed what? That . . .

Verse 9 _____

Verse 10 _____

Verse 11 _____

Emphasize the Spiritual

Look over the topics listed in the model prayers above.

How many were for spiritual matters? _____

How many were for material needs or changes? _____

The prayers of Jesus and of Paul show they gave prayer for spiritual change first place. Their prayers show their concern for spiritual matters far exceeded requests for material needs. Of the twenty-five or more requests in these prayers, only one is for material or physical concerns - the request for daily bread. This is not to say that we should not pray about physical or material concerns. It does indicate, however, that the emphasis of our praying ought to be on spiritual concerns. Our prayers should ask first for the glory of God and for His purposes. Jesus taught us to begin our prayers by asking that God's name be hallowed, that His kingdom come, and that His will be done on earth. This takes precedence over all else we might ask.

Much of our praying is crisis praying. In His great prayer in John 17, Jesus is at the most somber and difficult moment of His life. His prayer is a majestic monument of untroubled love. He asked for only a few things, but He repeated again and again their importance. He prayed for great sweeping issues - issues whose weight and importance could not even be perceived by those who were with Him.

Walking in Fellowship with God Today

Today make a point to increase the number of spiritual petitions you present to the Lord. Pray about your role in the kingdom. What about the kingdom, to your knowledge, needs prayer? Pray for leaders in the work of the kingdom. Pray for unity in the body of Christ.

Look again at Paul's prayers for believers at Ephesus, Colossae, and Philippi. Single out four Christians in your Disciple's Prayer Life group and pray as Paul did for those spiritual changes in their lives. Write their names on a separate sheet of paper.

PERSONAL PRAYER REQUESTS

Today's Learning Goal

You will be able to list your personal prayer needs, after studying Bible examples, of personal petitions.

Three Areas of Personal Requests

You should petition God for your own personal needs. Jesus taught this to His disciples. In the model prayer, after the prayer for God's honor and kingdom, Jesus authorized a series of personal requests:

- for daily food,
- for forgiveness of sins, and
- for deliverance from temptation (Matt. 6:11-13).

These indicate three large areas God is interested in - our physical needs, the restoration to fellowship with Him if we break it, and protection from forces beyond our control. "Temptation" can refer either to an enticement to sin or to a trial. We are specifically promised deliverance from anything God allows us to be tempted with (I Cor. 10:13), and so we can and should ask God for that deliverance.

Yesterday, you prayed the model prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 for yourself. Pray for yourself the three requests listed above.

Ask for Guidance

Jesus not only told us to ask about personal needs, but He Himself did just that. He often prayed for guidance. The night before He chose the twelve disciples, He spent the entire night in prayer (Luke 6:12-13). When the time came to expand His Galilean ministry beyond Capernaum, Jesus arose early in the morning and prayed in a "solitary place" (Mark 1:35-39). Jesus' prayers demonstrate that divine guidance is available through prayer.

We have other examples of Biblical characters seeking God's guidance.

1. What guidance did David seek in I Samuel 23:2-4?

2. Read Genesis 24:12-14. What guidance did Abraham's servant, Eliezer seek in prayer?

In what areas are you personally needing guidance at the present time?

Ask for Wisdom

Another similar personal petition found often in Scripture is for wisdom. Asking for wisdom is appropriate. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5)

1. In I Kings 3:9-12 who asked for wisdom? _____
2. In Romans 16:19 who wanted the Romans to be wise? _____
3. In Matthew 10:16 who wanted wisdom for those sent out? _____

What special need for wisdom do you have at this time?

Other Personal Requests

In the Bible, most personal requests turn out to bring great benefit for the work of God, even if they seem to pertain only to the one asking. Look at the following Scriptures and write what each person petitioned.

Genesis 15:2-6 (Abram) _____

I Samuel 1:10-11 (Hannah) _____

Luke 1:13 (Zacharias) _____

2 Kings 20:1-3 (Hezekiah) _____

Acts 9:36-42 (Peter) _____

All the above requests were for material or physical changes, but each answer had great spiritual results. Abram prayed for a son, and the answer to that prayer, Isaac, became a very important ingredient in God's creation of the chosen people. Hannah's prayer for a son produced one of the pivotal figures of Israel's history, Samuel. He became the last of the judges and also a prophet prefiguring many of the later great prophets of Israel. Zacharias' prayer for a son was answered with the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. Although these prayers seem to be personal and

private, God was guiding their utterance because of what each of these prayers ultimately produced for His purposes.

Other seemingly personal requests in the Bible follow the same pattern of producing unexpected benefits for the purposes of God. In a mortal sickness, Hezekiah prayed to live. He survived, and later Manasseh was born to him. Although Manasseh was a very wicked king, his succession to the throne preserved the royal Davidic line for the coming of the Messiah.

Peter's prayer for the resurrection of Dorcas brought about the conversion of many people in Joppa so that the church grew. No doubt Dorcas continued to minister to the needs of others as she had prior to her death. Personal, private prayers of godly people are likely to yield great results for the kingdom of God

To list all the personal prayers you might make would be pointless. Different people and different circumstances call for different specific requests. Remember, however, the Bible commends personal prayer. The tone of the whole Bible is that God uses the personal prayers of godly people to accomplish greater ends than the pray-er might expect.

Walking in Fellowship with God Today

Personal requests should grow out of a personal relationship to the Lord. Today, try to envision how God sees your personal requests. Think of two personal requests you have recently made or could make today. Prayerfully trace out what would happen in the kingdom or to the honor of God if those requests were granted. Learn to say: "Thy kingdom come in the granting of (*personal request*)."

ASKING FOR OTHERS

Today's Learning Goal

You will understand and begin to follow the pattern of people in Scripture by praying for friends, enemies, civil authorities, your nation, and the sick. Prayer of Intercession is a form of prayer. Make a list of Biblical examples of people who prayed for others. Write the name of the pray-er, the one(s) prayed for, and a Scripture reference.

Pray-er	Prayed For	Scripture Reference

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement and why: Write your response on the lines below.

"Intercessory prayer...reaches its highest power and its highest goal when it is intended to bring the kingdom and accomplish the will of God."

Intercessory Prayer

Praying for others often is referred to as intercessory prayer. If we are to love others as ourselves, we should pray for others as ourselves. We have seen that Jesus prayed for His disciples in John 17. An especially poignant prayer is His prayer for Simon at the Lord's Supper. After telling the disciples that Satan had asked permission to sift them like wheat, Jesus then told Simon, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). This prayer made possible Peter's great courage before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:8-12. The Sanhedrin "saw the boldness of Peter and John" and "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13)!

Other examples you should have listed include Jesus' prayers for us (Heb. 9:24; Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:33-34), the Jerusalem church's prayer for Peter (Acts 12:5), and Paul's prayers for the churches of his day (Eph. 1:15-20; Col. 1:9-11; Phil. 1:9; I Thess. 3:10-13; 2 Thess. 1:11). You may have also noticed the prayers implied by Paul's requests of the churches at Thessalonica, Rome, Ephesus, Colossae, and Philippi.

Intercessory prayer reaches its highest potential when it is intended to further the kingdom of God and accomplish His will.

PRAYING FOR THE LOST

Today's Learning Goal

You will understand five steps in praying for the lost and demonstrate your compassion for the lost through prayer.

Your Heart's Desire

How frequently do you pray specifically for a lost person by name? (Check your response and be honest.)

- At least daily
- Twice or more per week
- Once per week
- Less than once each week

The amount you pray for the lost may indicate one or more things about your thinking. It may indicate how much compassion you have for the lost. It may indicate whether or not you believe prayer can have an effect on the lost person's life. It may indicate what you believe about hell and the lost person's destiny.

Paul's "heart's desire and prayer" for his fellow Jews was for their salvation (Rom. 10:1). He so reflected the mind of Christ that his heart became like God's heart. The essence of all prayer is agreeing with God, and God does not want any person to die without accepting the generous sacrifice of His Son for the purpose of salvation. God desires that all come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). The more we pray, the more we think like God thinks. As a faithful prayer warrior, you will want to cultivate a compassion for the lost that wants "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4), just as God does.

Praying for the lost will involve not only beseeching God for their initial acceptance of Christ's salvation, but also the larger prayer request that an atmosphere for spiritual growth will be available to new converts.

Visualizing

Sometimes visualizing helps us to see God's point of view. If we are submitting to the Lordship of Christ, filled and guided by the Holy Spirit, and are earnestly seeking the mind and heart of God, He will prompt our prayer by helping us mentally "see" what He sees. We then apply our faith and action to bring into reality the God-given vision. We ask God for what He wants to give, and rejoice in the vision of the completed answer to our request.

A helpful prayer exercise is to visualize a lost person receiving Christ, being baptized, and finally becoming a glorious light for the Lord by contributing notably to the life of the church.

Close your eyes and visualize yourself presenting to God at His judgment seat some lost person you know as one you yourself brought to Christ. Think of what you would say to God and what He would say to you.

Five Steps in Praying for the Lost

A helpful progression in praying for the lost is:

1. Cultivate a genuine concern and love for the lost.
2. Discover specific people in your concentric circles of relationship who are lost.
3. Pray appropriately and in detail for these specific persons.
4. Persist in prayer.
5. Thank God for each step He takes in moving them to salvation.

Step One: Cultivate a Genuine Concern

Christian history is replete with men and women whose burning heart so yearned for the salvation of the lost that they sacrificed health, comfort, and even family to gain for God those Christ-less souls He longed for. David Brainerd agonized so intensely in prayer for the Indians in New England that he is described as one who "wept himself to death." He had to leave his missionary work because of tuberculosis. John Knox prayed, "Give me Scotland or I die!" As a missionary to India, William Carey agonized for seven years before he saw his first convert.

Ask God to impress on you the dread penalty of being lost. As Christians grow older, their security in the hands of God sometimes does the opposite of what it should do; it leads to a comfortable indifference to the awesome eternity of hell, instead of a grateful acknowledgement of our salvation in the form of witnessing. Ask God to increase your horror of hell and to give you a renewed vision of Christ suffering your own judgment.

Step Two: Discover Specific People

Prayer for the lost should be specific prayer. It should include prayer for specific individuals and specific requests for those individuals.

In the blanks below write the names of lost persons in the relationships named. Select persons that are closest to you at this time.

Neighbor/Suite-mate: _____

Friend: _____

Acquaintance (classmate, social, or work with): _____

Add them to your prayer list. Which of these three individuals do you think is closest to making a decision for Christ? _____

Which do you think is furthest from being ready to accept Christ?

Step Three: Pray

In your prayer for these persons, remember that you can only impact God's side of the relationship; you cannot touch anything God would not touch. God leaves the will free. Anyone who accepts salvation must decide to do so. God will not force them.

Pray the following requests for each of the persons you listed above. Check below when you have prayed as indicated.

_____ Lord, bring effective witnesses, including me, across their path.

_____ Savior, arrange circumstances in their life in such a way that the very details of their living will point them to Christ.

_____ Lord, send your Holy Spirit in great power to convict them of their sin and their lost condition.

_____ Father, cause them to understand, through Your Holy Spirit, that Jesus is adequate for their salvation from sin.

Step Four: Persist in Prayer

Remember that God honors importunity, or persistence. Keep in mind that delayed answers are sometimes a test of your faith. Ask God to reveal new ways to pray for them, such as using their needs as pointers to Christ's sufficiency, or prodding their memory with Scripture they may have heard. Pray for specific individuals that may be able to impact their lives for Christ. Pray without wavering.

Step Five: Thank God

Ask God to sensitize you to the progress your target person is making toward salvation.