

Session 1: A life of prayer

Reflection/discussion

The command to pray

Luke 18:1

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Colossians 4:2

Jesus prayed

Luke 6:12

Luke 9:18, 28

Luke 11:1

Believers are commanded to persist in prayer. Communication is essential in any relationship. Prayer is communication with God. It involves talking to and listening to God.

In this session, we will focus on the following:

- The benefits of prayer
- Who do we pray to?
- When should we pray?
- Where should we pray?
- What should we pray for?
- How should we pray?
- What hinders effective prayer?
- What facilitates effective prayer?
- What about corporate prayer?



The benefits of prayer

Reflection/discussion

Matthew 7:7-11

Matthew 21:22

John 16:24

Philippians 4:6-7

James 5:13-16

"Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength."

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."

"What wings are to a bird, and sails to a ship, so is prayer to the soul."

Corrie Ten Boom

Who do we pray to?

We have one GOD, manifested in Three Persons - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All THREE are involved in the process of prayer.

Reflection/discussion

Matthew 6:6
John 14:6
John 15:16
Romans 8:26-27

Prayer enables us to build a relationship with God. We can ask Him for anything we need, in the name of Jesus, and He will answer us in accordance with His will, which is always what is best. Praying in the name of Jesus implies that we believe in Him and have made up our minds to live in obedience to Him, daily. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray according to the will of God.

When should we pray?

Reflection/discussion

1 Thessalonians 5:17
Psalm 88:13
Acts 10:9
Acts 10:30-31
Daniel 6 - The example of Daniel

Where should we pray?

Matthew 6:5-6
Luke 5:16
Mark 1:35
The example of Peter and John:
Acts 3:1-10
Acts 4:23-24



It is good practice to establish a regular time of daily prayer. Many people find that praying first thing in the morning gives them the right focus and attitude for the day. It is helpful to have a place for regular private prayer.

What should we pray for?

Philippians 4:6
Ephesians 6:18

How should we pray?

Reflection/discussion

Prayer can be instant and very short – even as short as, “Help!”.

Nehemiah 2:1-6 The example of Nehemiah

Be careful of trying to impress people with long public prayers.

Jesus said,

‘And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Matthew 6:5-8_{NIVUK}

Prayer should sometimes be accompanied by fasting – denying oneself of food, or choice food, for a period of time in order to humble oneself and pray.

Jesus said:

‘When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:16-18_{NIVUK}

Daniel 10:1-12 the example of Daniel

It is helpful to have a structure for spending longer periods in prayer.

The following order may be helpful. It is based on the principles found in the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples.

‘This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

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

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Matthew 6:9-13_{NIVUK}

Thanksgiving and Praise

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.
For the Lord is good and his love endures for ever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.
Psalm 100:4-5_{NIVUK}



Humble confession (asking for forgiveness)

1 John 1:9
Luke 18:9-14



Petition/supplication (making requests)

Philippians 4:6-7
Matthew 7:7-11
1 John 5:14-15



What hinders effective prayer?

Unanswered prayer

Some people become discouraged and stop praying because they have not received the answers they expect.

It is important to remember that God's loving answer may include an outright yes, or wait - not yet, or here is something better, or no. God knows what is best and it is wise to persist in prayer until He says otherwise.

2 Corinthians 12:1-10 The example of Paul

There are other reasons for unanswered prayer that should be addressed.

Isaiah 59:1-2
Matthew 6:14-15
James 4:1-3

Too busy to pray
Matthew 6:25-34

What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer
O what peace we often forfeit
O what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer
Joseph M. Scriven



Unbelief
Hebrews 3:12
James 1:5-8

What facilitates effective prayer?

Faith in God
Mark 11:22-25
Matthew 9:20-22
Matthew 9:27-31
Romans 4:16-21 The example of the unwavering faith of Abraham

Praying according to the will of God
1 John 5:14-15

Perseverance
Luke 18:1-8

What about corporate prayer?
1 Timothy 2:1-6
Acts 4:23-31
Acts 12:1-19



Session 2: Living by the Spirit

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-25^{NIVUK}

The word, 'flesh' in this context is not referring to the physical body. In this context, the word represents mere human nature that wants to have its own way and is therefore prone to sin. When someone gives in to the desires of the flesh, they end up sinning against God.

Reflection/discussion

Understanding the danger of gratifying the desires of the flesh

The flesh/sinful nature

Romans 7:14-24

Isaiah 53:6

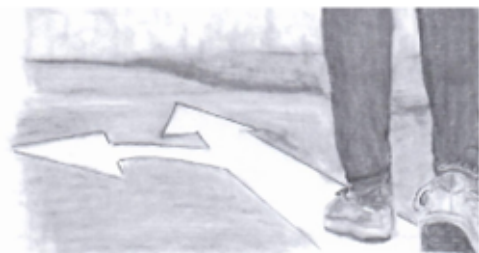
Galatians 5:19-21

Worldly thought patterns

1 John 2:14-17

1 John 5:18-20

Colossians 2:7-9



Every person is born into and lives in a world that is in rebellion against God. Worldviews, worldly thought patterns and attitudes do not all automatically disappear from the mind the moment someone is born again into God's human family. The difference is that the person's spirit is now alive to God, and desires to do the will of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit who now indwells them.

There is therefore an on-going conflict between what the flesh desires and what the Spirit desires.

Each believer must be **intentional** about overcoming the flesh and learning to live by the Spirit.

Reflection/discussion

Living by the Spirit

On-going transformation

Psalm 139:23-24

Romans 12:2

2 Corinthians 10:1-5

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 5:16-17_{NIVUK}

The Holy Spirit, who inspired scripture, will use the word of God to expose worldly, sinful thought patterns embedded in the mind. It is important to be proactive in responding with humble repentance, intentionally replacing the exposed lies with the truth from God's word.

Keeping in step with the Spirit

Believers must learn to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit in daily life. This is in line with what Jesus said about what it means to be His disciples.

Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

Luke 9:23_{NIVUK}

Believers who are intentional about obeying God will grow in their ability to discern the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, so long as they cultivate a humble, expectant, and always attentive way of life.

It is important practice listening to the Holy Spirit internally, even while paying attention to whatever we are facing externally.

The Holy Spirit will always lead us to act in obedience to the word of God. It is really about intentional choices. Keeping step with the Spirit means to choose to obey the Holy Spirit rather than what the world dictates or what the flesh desires.

The result is increasing manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Session 3: Studying the Bible

The Bible - the Book of books

The Bible is made up of 66 books, having different human authors who lived over a period of 1,500 - 1,600 years. Although it was written by human beings, it was inspired by God, the Holy Spirit. It reveals God's dealings with human beings in the past, at present and in the future.

The 'CONTENTS' page shows the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament.

The Bible is the word of God.

The following resource reviews evidence that the Bible is indeed God's word and is therefore true, trustworthy, reliable, a faithful witness of reality and truth, authentic and has the power to transform lives for the better.

Course: Laying foundations, Session 3, The Bible is ...

<https://youtu.be/nJ2-KHWR60U>

Reflection/discussion

Why study the Bible?

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Psalm 119:105

Acts 17:11-12

Hebrews 4:12-13

Studying, meditating on, and obeying the word of God are absolutely essential for all believers.

There are no contradictions in the Bible

It is a common misconception that there are contradictions in the Bible. The Bible is the word of God, inspired by God, the Holy Spirit, therefore there cannot be any contradictions in it. It may be necessary to work harder with some texts in order to understand and see the coherence between all scripture.

The following resource demonstrates that the contents of the Bible perfectly fit together.

Course: Laying foundations, Session 4, A perfect fit

<https://youtu.be/l0A9wCU1XMQ>

Helpful tips

Overview

Aim to read through the whole Bible over and over again. There are resources available online and otherwise to facilitate this.

Some aim to read through the Bible each year. Others may take much longer. Some read from Genesis to Revelation, others read it in chronological order, still others mix up the order in which they go through the different books.

Note that there will be many things you will not understand yet. Do not be put off by them. People who have read through the Bible very many times still do not understand it all. The important thing is that one understands more and more and gains an increasing overall perspective of what God wants us to know and live by. **It is important for all children of GOD to persist and persevere in reading through the Bible repeatedly.**

In depth study

In addition to growing in overall perspective of the scriptures, it is very important to do in depth studies of texts or topics, taking as much time as needed to fully understand what the text is really saying, and resolving to apply and live by these truths and principles, with the guidance and enablement of the Holy Spirit.

Contexts matter a great deal

There are levels of context that must be taken into account.

1. Overall perspective of all scripture. A growing knowledge of what is or what is not in the Bible. No particular text will be in conflict with the rest of the Bible if it is properly understood.
2. The text being studied must be viewed in the context of the texts around it, to make sure that it is not misinterpreted or misunderstood.
3. It may be appropriate to read a whole book or a whole letter in the Bible before undertaking a study of parts of it in order to understand its overall purpose.
4. It is important to pay attention to the cross references to other scriptures that are made within the text being studied.
5. It is occasionally necessary to take the time to investigate the context of writers of scripture and their immediate audiences so as to avoid misunderstanding and misapplying their teaching.

You are not alone

Believers should help one another. Do not hesitate to ask questions from people you trust. Always check that the answers you take on board meet the criteria above.

Versions of the Bible

All properly translated versions of the Bible agree. Proper translations are the painstaking work of many scholars using the oldest copies of manuscripts in their original languages.

For example, the NIV (New International version) was translated by a team of over 100 scholars from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. The translation took ten years. Any personal opinions and biases would have been eliminated.

Similarly, the NLT (New Living Translation) was translated from the original texts by 90 scholars.

Beware of...

- Paraphrases where one person produces a Bible.
- Apparent “translations” by one person who may not even be a Bible scholar.
- Bibles that have commentaries beside the texts. Those commentaries are often confused as scripture. They are not. They are personal opinions. It is better to read commentaries, published separately from the Bible.
- Using translations of the Bible where the language used is so old that you may need a glossary to ensure that you really understand what is being communicated.
- The numbers in the Bible. They were not there originally. They are only helpful for finding and sharing texts.
- Recognise your own linguistic limitations! Be humble and continually seek to grow in your understanding, and in your use of words.

Reflection/discussion

Meditating on the word of God

Psalms 1:1-3

Colossians 3:16

Meditating on scripture involves thinking about the verses read, in order to understand and apply them.

The importance of obedience

Matthew 7:24-27

James 1:22-25

Memorising key verses

Psalms 119:11

Psalms 37:30-31

Psalms 40:8



Session 4: Fellowship of believers

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:19-25^{NIVUK}

Reflection/discussion

Facilitating fellowship

Acts 2:42-47

Romans 16:3-5

Colossians 4:15

Philemon verse 2

The early Church was organised in such a way as to encourage effective fellowship. In addition to individual friendships, small teams and families, the Church met regularly as a corporate body and in small groups which were effectively "Churches in Homes"

Church in the home

Small groups or "churches in homes" that meet weekly is a very effective way of ensuring that each member of the church is properly connected to the local Body of Christ - the Church.

In this context, members can:

- Enjoy each other's company
- Care for each other
- Express corporate thanksgiving and praise to God
- Grow together
- Pray together
- Work together to bring others into fellowship with Jesus Christ and with one another.

Meetings as a corporate local Church and in small groups are the minimum requirement for fellowship. Connections and friendships outside meetings are also very important.

Each person contributing

1 Corinthians 14:26

Ephesians 4:1-16

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

The command to love one another

John 15:9-17

1 John 4:7-12

1 Corinthians 12

Believers are not yet perfect. Members of a small group will be at different stages of growth and maturity in the faith. Being intentional about always acting in the best interest of the other person, in line with the will of God, will enable imperfect people to genuinely demonstrate love for one another and help one another to grow.



Facilitating healthy interaction

James 1:19-20

James 3:1-12

Matthew 18:21-35

Ephesians 4:2-3

Ephesians 4:25-42

- Listen more than you speak
- Watch what you say to others - consider the impact of your words
- Be ready to forgive others, as you have been forgiven
- Be patient with others
- Be truthful always
- Ensure that love is always your motive

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Luke 6:31^{NIVUK}

Session 5: Signposts for Jesus

Jesus said

'...But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

Acts 1:8^{NIVUK}

All believers are commanded to be witnesses of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. There are no exemptions.

Reflection/discussion

Who is a witness?

1 John 1:1-3

Acts 1:15-22

Acts 2:32-33



A witness of Jesus Christ simply shares what they have learned and experienced, as opportunities are presented to them in everyday life. Such a person is intentional about recognising opportunities to testify to what faith in Jesus has done for them, and what He can do for others too.

A witness is motivated by love for others. They have experienced salvation from the power of sin, death and hell and know that the greatest act of love would be to point others to the only One who can save them. They become signposts to Jesus. They represent Jesus to the people around them as His ambassadors.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:14-20^{NIVUK}

Some reasons for not obeying the command to be a witness

I don't know enough

John 4:1-42 – the example of the Samaritan woman

John 1:40-42



Anyone who knows enough to be converted, knows enough to tell others about salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus.

I can't convert anyone

1 Thessalonians 1:2-5

John 16:7-11

It is the Holy Spirit who convicts people to the point of conversion. The responsibility of a witness is to share about Jesus, leaving the outcomes to God.

I am afraid of people's negative reactions

1 Peter 3:13-16

Romans 1:16

People may scoff, and mock and laugh at things they do not understand. A witness of Jesus must learn to overcome their fear of people.

I am not called to be an evangelist

All believers are commanded to be involved in the work of reaching others for Jesus and making disciples of those who are willing to repent of their sins and put their trust in Jesus.

Matthew 28:18-20

It is true that not every believer is called and specially gifted to be an evangelist. Evangelists are a gift and a blessing to a local Church. They are not only involved in regular outreach activities, but they also help to equip all believers to be effective witness, doing their part in obeying Jesus's command to make disciples for Him.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

Romans 10:12-14^{NIVUK}

Session 6: A generous spirit

The way believers handle their material resources, especially money, demonstrates whether or not they are truly committed to doing the will of God as their Lord, and whether they really trust Him to provide for their needs. Voluntary, cheerful, and generous giving is part of our worship of God and shows that we are free from the love of money which is the root of all kinds of evil.

Reflection/discussion

God, or money?

Matthew 6:24-34

Hebrews 13:5-6

1 Timothy 6:3-10

God made it clear throughout Scripture that He expects His people to give wholeheartedly and generously, in proportion to their incomes, in order to demonstrate their love for Him and their trust and dependence on Him to continue to provide for them.

The blessing of giving

Luke 6:38

Proverbs 11:24-25

2 Corinthians 9:6-15



Biblical giving

Important resource:

A full treatment of giving as found in the word of God can be found in the King's Church policy on giving.

See Resources on King's Church Centre App

Or,

King's Church website → Resources → Discipleship Series

Reflection/discussion

Examples of generous giving in the New Testament Church

Acts 4:32-37

2 Corinthians 8:1-7

Mark 12: 41-44

Obedient disciples of Jesus are encouraged to give voluntarily, willingly, and cheerfully -

- tithe as a minimum
- free will offerings in addition
- time, gifts, talents, and other resources for the service of God
- to the poor and needy, individually, and corporately.

Giving to the poor and needy corporately makes it easier to obey the command of our Lord Jesus to give anonymously. When we give as individuals, as we should, we are encouraged to do so without drawing attention to ourselves.

'Be careful not to practise your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

'So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:1-4^{NIVUK}

Individuals may choose to give to the work of other ministries or charitable organisations, but only after their tithes and offerings have been given to their local church, as clearly shown in scriptures.

Reflection/discussion

Hospitality encouraged

1 Peter 4:9-10

Romans 12:13

Hebrews 13:1-2

Session 7: Enduring persecution

As believers share their faith with others, they may experience some persecution, mostly in the form of ridicule or rejection.

Godly living, doing the will of God, will definitely bring about different degrees of persecution from people who want to control and manipulate others into doing what they want.

Reflection/discussion

The expectation

John 15:18-21

2 Timothy 3:10-13

The blessing

Matthew 5:10-12

The promise

Romans 8:16-18

Romans 8:28-39

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

And,

'If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?'

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

1 Peter 4:12-19_{NIVUK}

Responding to persecution

- Do not be surprised
- Do not be ashamed
- You are blessed
- Rejoice
- Praise God

Session 8: Persevering till the end

Don't give up!

To persevere is to keep pressing on, trusting God, looking up and obeying God, even in difficult circumstances.

Jesus said -

'Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Matthew 24:9-14_{NIVUK}

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

James 5:7-11_{NIVUK}

Reflection/discussion

The blessings of perseverance

Romans 5:1-5

James 1:2-4

2 Peter 1:3-11

Hebrews 12:1-12

Persevering

Galatians 6:9

Hebrews 10:36-39

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

