

## **WHEN YOU PRAY - Bible Study Devotional**

### A Study of 6 Prayers in the Bible

(All information in this study below is adapted from the devotional when you When You Pray Study Devotional book from Lifeway Ministries)

#### **SESSION 1 - INTRODUCTION**

Prayer, simply put, is talking with God. It is designed by God to be a beautiful gift of communication between the Creator and the children created in His image. We are a world of born communicators, so prayer should come naturally to us. But depending on the amount of time you've spent as a follower of Christ, your prayer life has likely ebbed and flowed through seasons of intimate conversation to uncomfortable silence and back again.

Oftentimes, we find it difficult to pray consistently, or we feel like our prayers lack passion and power. Sometimes, we make it to the end of busy days only to realize we haven't prayed at all. In other moments, we're so overcome with longing or loss that we struggle to find words to express the groanings of our hearts. And in other moment's, our souls overflow with gratitude for God's grace.

At one point in the Gospel of Luke, we read Jesus "was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Of all the conversations the four Gospels give us between Jesus and His disciples, this was the only time when one of them asked Jesus to teach him how to do something. It seems he knows what you know: Prayer is important, and it's hard. He also knew Jesus was the right One to ask. Anytime the disciples were looking for Him, they found Him in prayer.

As the prayers of the Bible demonstrate, God invites all your words, all the time. But as you study the prayers of the Bible and adopt their rhythms as your own, you'll learn that prayer is about so much more than asking God for things. It's about a never-ending conversation with your Heavenly Father.

God invites all your words, all the time.

## SESSION 2: YOUR KINGDOM COME

### (THE LORD'S PRAYER)

**Verses to study this week:** Matthew 6:5-13

#### Day 1

Read *Matthew 6:5-8*

To better understand "The Lord's Prayer" some call it "The Disciple's Prayer," since we're the ones praying it - we'll begin where Jesus did. He did not actually jump straight into praying; rather, He focused on our approach to prayer and the nature of our Heavenly Father to whom we pray.

- In verse 5, Jesus told His disciples not to pray like what type of people? Why?
  
- Look back at verse 6. What three things did Jesus tell us we should do when we pray?
  - 1. \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2. \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **When You Pray Today**

What a perfect time to find a "secret place" so you can pray to your Heavenly Father. Remember, He not only sees in secret but is in secret with you. Find that quiet place. Whether it's a favorite chair, a park you like to walk in , or your closet. He longs to meet with you!

#### Day 2

Read *Matthew 6:9-13*

For Jesus's Jewish audience in particular, a prayer for daily bread would have also brought to mind a significant time period in Israel's history, a time when God uniquely provided. Literal bread, water, and shelter would have also been very real concerns for much of Jesus's first-century audience. Most of us going through this study didn't wake up wondering if we would be able to eat today or if we'd have shelter. But asking God to give us our "daily bread" not only communicates our dependence on Him to provide our basic needs, but it also reminds us to rely on Him for all of life's provisions.

- In verse 11, Jesus told us to pray for our daily bread. What does praying for our daily bread mean to you?
  
- What does it represent in your life?

### **When You Pray Today**

End by praying for daily bread with a renewed sense of confidence in God's desire to meet your needs.

## **Day 3**

Read Matthew 6:9-13 giving special attention to verse 12.

The body of Christ can't exist without forgiveness flowing in and out of us. This is why verse 12 of the Lord's Prayer is so essential. Without seeking regular forgiveness from God, our relationship with Him is hindered. And without giving it and receiving it amongst ourselves, we can lose our most precious gift - each other.

- Look back at verse 12. What two aspects of forgiveness are mentioned?
  
- What do these verses tell us about the seriousness of forgiving those who have hurt us?

### **When You Pray Today**

Is there an area of sin in your life that you haven't asked the Lord's forgiveness for? If so, pray for it now.

Is there someone in your life you're harboring unforgiveness toward? If so, pray to forgive. Place your heartbreak, fears, and concerns in the Lord's hands. He can handle them.

## SESSION 3: MY HEART REJOICES IN THE LORD

(PRAYERS OF PETITION & THANKSGIVING)

Verses to study this week: 1 Samuel 1:1-2:11

### Day 1

Read *1 Samuel 1:3-6*

Women such as Hannah not only had to reckon with their own internal sense of shame but also the societal pressures that assumed their barrenness was a consequence, a curse, or a response from God to their sin.

- Whom does this passage “blame” for Hannah’s infertility? Use scripture to explain.
- When you think about God being sovereign over suffering, what are the feelings and thoughts that come to mind? Be honest.

#### **When You Pray Today**

Identify a problem you want to take before the Lord. As you petition God to handle that problem, ask Him to help you see how He is using (or wants to use) your suffering for His glory.

### Day 2

Read *1 Samuel 1:3-8*

Barrenness is hard enough as it is, but when a problem becomes a pattern, the problem can become unbearable. Put yourself in Hannah’s shoes for a moment.

- How might being barren for that amount of time affect your view of God?
- What temptations might arise from such a situation?

#### **When You Pray Today**

What has become a pattern of petition in your life? A prayer you’re still waiting on God to answer? As you voice that prayer, add David’s words in Psalm 42:5 to your prayer - “I will still praise Him, my Savior and my God.”

### Day 3

Read *Psalm 42*

The Psalms propel us into the deepest questions about ourselves, about others, and about God. As we let them expose the depths of our emotion, they will lead us to the God who reveals Himself in the midst of our struggle.

- How honest are you with God during prayer?
- What motivates you to be honest or what prevents you from being honest?

#### **When You Pray Today**

Set aside some time right now or later today to sit with God.

1. Be emotionally honest with God.
2. Look through the Scriptures and find an attribute or name of God that applies to your circumstances.
3. Ask God to change your heart, giving you the humility needed to be content with how God answers your prayer, as well as the humility needed to give Him back everything you've received.

### **SESSION 4 - YOUR WORKS ARE WONDROUS (PRAYERS OF ADORATION)**

Verses to study this week: Psalm 139

#### **Day 1**

Read *Psalms 139:1-4*

A.W. Tozer notes,

“God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all being and every being, all creature hood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell”.

- How is the truth that God knows all things including our habits, thoughts, location, and words-a deep source of comfort for us?

- How should it change the way we pray?
- Take some time to acknowledge who God is aloud. Listen to the following song:  
Worthy by Elevation Worship

### **When You Pray Today**

Today you saw that God is:

OMNISCIENT: He knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

- Fill in the following statement:  
Knowing that God is omniscient shows me that  
I am \_\_\_\_\_
- Use that statement as a starting point for a wrap-up prayer of adoration.

## **Day 2**

Read *Psalm 139:13-16/ Colossians 1: 15-17*

God is the creator of all things. Everything is from Him. God is limitless and we see His wonders around us. Although at times we don't understand, it is great to know and rely that God is bigger than our understanding.

- How does the fact that God made everything and is present everywhere help explain how God knows everything?
- How does our value of others change when we consider who created them?
- How should it impact the way we pray?

### **When You Pray Today**

Take some time to acknowledge God is an everlasting King. Listen to the following song:  
Everlasting God by Chris Tomlin

### Day 3

Read *Psalms 139:19-24/ 1 John 3:2-3*

David's deep love for the Lord, he hated everything that was opposition to Him. David prays for God's judgment on the wicked in accordance with His holy character.

David wrote Psalm 139, he was facing flesh and blood enemies who wanted to destroy him. But what about us?

After an extended confession of the transcendent glory of God, David responds with hatred of what God hates.

- What might we learn from this?
- How does meditating on God's character reorient us to hate what He hates (specifically, our sin)?

David closes with another thought that connects back to the beginning of the psalm. Compare Psalm 139:24 with verse 3. In both verses, mark the word *way*.

How do the two ideas pair with one another?

#### **When You Pray Today**

Spend some time with God, aligning your heart to His. Listen to the following song: Build My Life by Houseflies

### **SESSION 5: HOW LONG, O LORD? (PRAYERS OF LAMENT)**

Verse to study this week: Psalm 119:145

#### **Day 1**

Read *Psalm 13:1-4*

How long, O Lord? How many times have you said that to the Lord in your lifetime? For some of us it seems like it's the question that is always on our lips. In these verses we see David crying out to the Lord in despair. We've all been there at some time in our life, some of us may be feeling this at this very moment. When the feelings of fear, worries, despair and loss feel like it's too much to bear. David knew who to go to in these moments- do you?

- Describe a time when you felt like David in Psalm 13:1-4.

Now read *Psalm 13:5-6*

David knew that he could lament his feelings to God, and he often did. But he never stopped there. He shifted from lament to praise. He made a choice to remember who God is in the midst of what he was experiencing. He made the choice to shift from despair to devotion- in the God who cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)

### **When You Pray Today**

Develop your trust muscle today by praying Psalm 13:-5-6. Write the verses on a sticky note or type them into your phone and refer to them all day. Affirming those choices in prayer will remind you that **you can trust God** with your pain and it will lead you to a **place of praise**.

## **Day 2**

Read *Psalm 3*

For David in Psalm 3, that point happened in verse 3 when he referred to God as his shield. In Psalm 28:6, David affirmed God heard him. In Psalm 142:5, the psalmist confessed God was his refuge. Confessing trust in God is the hinge that turns our grieving into grace, tears into trust, and worries into worship.

- What was the psalmist doing in Psalm 3:7?
- Think about the truth that God invites you to process your pain with Him. Is that a regular part of your prayer life? Why or why not?

Casting your anxiety/ worries on God requires you to let go- it is a trust exercise. Will you continue to hold on to the feelings that are causing you so much pain- or relinquish them in the hands of our Heavenly Father. Psalm 3 gives us an example of how we can put this into practice.

1. Address God. Remember He is the only one in the audience.
2. Pour out your heart. Hold nothing back, remember He already knows it all- do not let shame/ guilt hold you back from baring it all before the Lord.
3. Request help from God. He is your very present help in times of trouble.
4. Express trust. He can be trusted with all of you- including your heart.
5. Praise Him.



### **When You Pray Today**

Use the pattern (1-5) of lament above to write your own prayer to God of lament.

### **Day 3**

Read *Habakkuk 3:17-19*

Sometimes prayers of lament may feel like you are doing a whole lot of complaining- that may be true for some. We often experience so many thoughts and emotions all at once that we may not know exactly what it is that we need. Lamenting helps us to process all of this before the Lord. When you pour out, it also gives God the opportunity to pour in- His perspective, His words, His comfort to you.

- How many times did Habakkuk say “though”?
- Do you trust God through all your even “though” moments? Do you trust that He is good, even though” life isn’t always good?

Lamenting helps you to move forward in faith without getting stuck in your emotions and your suffering. Coming to God with your heart in hand is a step in faith and demonstrates your trust in Him. We offer up our hearts to Him through our cries for help, this is an open invitation for God to respond to us with healing, comfort, and clarity. As we do this we remember His track record- He is good...all the time.

Psalms 30:5b “Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning,”

### **When You Pray Today**

Pick one Psalm of Lament and pour out your heart to God along with the psalmist.

- Psalm 13: praying through your sadness
- Psalm 22: praying through your suffering
- Psalm 88: praying through your despair
- Psalm 137: praying through your anger

## SESSION 6 – MAY YOU BE FILLED (PRAYER OF INTERCESSION)

### Day 1

Read *Ephesians 3:14-16*

Great news – YOU ARE NOT ALONE! Not only does our Heavenly Father live inside us but He's made us part of something much larger - a church family.

As God's people we not only strive to meet basic needs within the body of Christ and the general community via food drives and good works; but we also help our brethren fight their spiritual battles. We do this through intercessory prayer.

Intercessory prayer is the powerful act of love where we make time to not pray for ourselves but for those in need. It's freely praying on behalf of others; regardless of who they may be; without prejudice or negative feelings. While the word builds walls of division we strive to be a united church of diverse people who fight for one another.

- How does the Bible passage challenge you to pray for others
- In these bible verses what stood out to you from the beginning of Paul's prayer?

### **When You Pray Today**

Pick one relationship or group of people to intercede for today and begin your prayer with the words of Ephesians 3:14-15

### Day 2

Read *Ephesians 3:17-19*

Stepping out of our comfort zone can be difficult; particularly when it involves social circles. It was God's choice to open His circle of followers to include not only Jews but gentiles as well. We are forever grateful that Christ invited all people, despite color, race or national origin, to be His children.

However, at times, my way of loving people can be conditional and imperfect. Past experiences or skewed perceptions of others can shape our ideas of love in an ungodly fashion. Loving people may require some housecleaning of our heart.

It is most important to begin with Christ's definition of love (see 1 John 4:10). God's love is steadfast and enduring; and worthy of imitating. Thank God, believers have the transformative power of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17 and Galatians 2:20). God wants to help transform His children so that we may love and pray for others – just like our loving Christ.

- Where do you struggle to love well?

- Do some people seem harder to love?
- How have past experiences or understandings shaped your ideas of love?

### **When You Pray Today**

Today, ask God to show you how to pray loving prayers even if they're uncomfortable and unpopular. Don't just say yes to those who seem easy to love. Choose to intercede for someone who may be hard for you to love but needs your intercession.

## **Day 3**

Read *Ephesians 3:20-21*

God is power. In God's perfect plan, He created His church to be filled with His power that's given to us through the Holy Spirit. As if that weren't enough, God's glory is displayed in His church when we live as per Jesus teachings of love. Church life is not about the "me" but about the "we".

We are living examples of His glory that shines for eternity. We have the responsibility to love each other and look out for the other. When one is weak we lift hands in intercession and bend knees in prayer. God is abundant in power and more than willing to provide for His children. This, of course, does not imply that God is genuinely granting wishes, but simply that God is pleased when we share God's love with others and are willing to intercede for each other. God is power. God is love.

- What does this teach us about God's purpose for our lives and for our church?
- What percentage of your prayers would you estimate are for your church and leaders as compared with prayers for yourself?

### **When You Pray Today**

Which Paul's example in mind, list a few prayers you should regularly be praying for:  
Your church and it's leaders -

Other Christians -

Non-Christians -

**SESSION 7 - MAY THEY BE ONE**  
(PRAYERS THAT UNIFY)

Verses to study this week: John 13-17

**Day 1**

Read *John 13:1*

Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. Now when it was time for supper.

He would share with His disciples before the calm was thrown into chaos. He knew the “hour had come”, a reference to the crucifixion (v.1). Can you imagine how Jesus felt during this last meal? Can you imagine all that was moving and stirring in His heart as He ate with His disciples, this group of men He loved so deeply, one last time before everything changed forever?

- List everything you learn about this moment in Jesus’s life from this one verse.
- How did Jesus love His disciples during the last supper?

**When You Pray Today**

Knowing that Jesus is with you as He was with the disciples in the last supper speak to him and share what’s in your heart.

**Day 2**

Read *John 14:2-3*

Jesus' words at the beginning of John 14 provided a powerful and beautiful image from their everyday lives to show His disciples that their coming pain was temporary. He showed them a glimpse of life past the trauma of crucifixion, resurrection, and the absence of His physical presence among them.

He began by telling them to not let their hearts be troubled, and to believe in God (the Father) and in Him (John 14:1a). The Father/Son imagery in John 14 gave His disciples (and us) massive eternal-perspective hope.

- In your own words, what is the good news of these verses?

- Why was it important for Jesus's disciples to know they would be reunited with Jesus, even if they didn't understand what He meant?
- Why is it important for us to know this now?

### **When You Pray Today**

Take a few minutes to practice praying for a handful of believers in your life, specifically for the ways they are living from Jesus today. Then voice a prayer for your church, specifically that it would be a tangible example of the father's house for the people in your community.

## **Day 3**

Read *John 15*

We pick up our story line today with John 15, the next chapter in the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17) of the Last Supper. AS we walk through this famous last meal with Jesus and His disciples, we inherit the very words He deposited into them on that special, sacred night before Gethsemane, arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection.

This is a typical rabbi-disciple (talmid, in Hebrew) interaction. A good disciple in Jesus's world wasn't the one with all the answers but the one with lots of questions. Questions were valued, honored and welcomed. They raise curiosity and cause one to lean in, listen up, and learn. AS a rabbi of Israel and as the Son of God, Jesus loves our questions. Not only can he handle them, but from His interactions in the Gospels we know that He welcomes, values, and honors them. He knows that we know that behind every question is a questioner, one who is leaning into Him to listen and learn.

I hope you've learned through this study that prayer is one of the best ways to ask your questions to the living God. Like you saw in the week of prayers of lament, the book of Psalms is full of people who were asking questions- sometimes hard,direct, and honest questions - to the Lord. If you ever wonder how God really feels about your questions just look at the volume and vulnerability of the ones He had recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

The bible was given to us so that we might know who the living God is and what He is like. When Jesus referred to His Father as the gardener, it's important to process what that meant in their Jewish world two thousand years ago. Is He the God who cuts us off when we're struggling? Or is there another way to understand Jesus' words and imagery here?

The word translated "cuts off" or "takes away" in verse 2 is the Greek word *airó*. Traditionally, *airó* has two meanings - to "cut off" or to "lift up".

- What are some areas of your life where you need the Gardener to lift you on a rock?
- What are some of the questions you find yourself asking the living God in this season of your life?
- What would it look like for you to spend some intentional time today sitting with your questions?

### **When You Pray Today**

Write your own psalm to the Lord.

Include in it some of your questions. Get honest.

This psalm is between you and the Lord. You are the only two who will ever see it.