

Basic Discipleship

A Course On New Testament Discipleship

Topic #4

A. We should pray because God is glorified through prayer.

1. The Lord Jesus — explained to the disciples in the Upper Room as to how God is glorified in prayer when He said (John 15:7-8):

7 “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

2. Jesus makes a marvelous promise & an astonishing pledge, but very often the conditions are not met — for He makes plain that the key to getting — what we want — is wanting what — He wants.
3. And the key to wanting what He wants is letting His Word ‘**abide in**’ us.
4. Then we can in faith ask whatever we want and trust God to answer, and it will be answered — for the simple reason that — our wants will not be — out of harmony — with His wants.
5. Jesus tells us that the, “**Father is glorified by this**” — that is our abiding in the Lord—because while coming to Him—with an abiding life we are able to see answered prayer producing “**fruit**” that brings glory to God.
6. A failure to see one’s prayers answered means something is not right in the believer’s life — namely that he is not truly abiding in Christ and in His Word—and so his prayers are improper and left unanswered.
7. The purpose of bearing ‘**fruit**’ is not to bring glory to us but to God and when we show God—working in and through us by answered prayer an unbelieving world will see God at work & “**by this**” is God “**glorified.**”

B. We should pray because God commands us to pray.

1. Jesus admonished & commanded us to pray as seen in Luke 18:1:

1 Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

2. Some place the emphasis of this parable’s teaching saying if we do not pray we will “**lose heart**” or become so discouraged that we will quit.
3. But if we read the entire parable carefully, Jesus is speaking about our praying “**at all times**” & in the process — we are “**not to lose heart.**”

4. Jesus did not mean—that we should always be—on our knees or in our prayer closet—or that we should go about—with bowed heads & closed eyes but that we should always be in what is called, “**a spirit of prayer.**”
5. With the same encouragement & command to pray, the Apostle Paul instructed us to — “**pray without ceasing**” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
6. Prayer is much more than the words of our lips, but it really represents the cry & desires & the expectations & the praise that is in our hearts.
7. And so, if our hearts are continually bent towards God — then we will constantly be in fellowship with God, often without ever saying a word.
8. Luke records that Jesus told us this parable so that we might not “**lose heart**” because Jesus knew it is easy to lose heart in prayer.
9. We can “**lose heart**” because prayer can be “**hard work**” that too often we approach flippantly — because we are undisciplined.
10. Colossians chapter 4, speaks of the necessity & labor of prayer (4:4,12):

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving . . . 12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

11. Paul encouraged the Colossians with Epaphras’ example because he was, “**always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers**” (Col. 4:12).
12. Paul knew that prayer was hard work that required heartfelt labor.
13. It is easy to “**lose heart**” because we are in a spiritual battle & so Satan hates prayer—because he knows that prayer—moves the hand of God.
14. It is easy to “**lose heart**” either through our ignorance of what God has revealed as to — how He works through prayer or due to our unbelief we are not convinced — of the power behind — our prayers.
15. Sadly, too often — prayer becomes a last resort — instead of our first resource & so Jesus ends His parable with sobering question (18:8b),

“However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”
16. This parable that concludes with this question cannot be divorced from the discussion of Christ’s return from Heaven that He just finished.

17. This question of His finding, “**faith on the earth**” — ties in with what Jesus taught in Luke 17:22–37—because the “**last days**” will be filled with corruption and spiritual death and unbelief and apostasy.
18. He just likened His return — to “**the days of Noah**” (17:26-28) and to “**the days of Lot**” (17:28-29) — such that in Noah’s day — only eight people were saved & in Lot’s day only three were saved out of Sodom.
19. Where evil and moral corruption are — judgment must follow (17:37), and so — believers are not to “**lose heart**” especially — as we approach the end of the age that will be characterized by lawlessness & unbelief.
20. Passages like 1 Timothy 4 and 2 Timothy 3 paint a dark picture of the last days and so it is essential that we pray and “**not lose heart.**”

C. We should pray because God delights in the prayer of the righteous.

1. While prayer at times can be “**hard work**” it can also be delightful and refreshing and encouraging for us, and it can be pleasing to God—for He said in Proverbs 15:8:

8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

2. The godly man or woman delights God with their prayer which is why the Lord Jesus could tell the Samaritan woman in John 4:23:

23 “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

3. The Lord Jesus had just told this lady, “**an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father**” (4:21) to underscore that it is not the location that makes worship authentic.
4. Prayer & worship are not merely an external act that you can accomplish by going to a place, but it is an issue of the heart that the Father “**seeks.**”
5. Clearly, God does not delight in everyone’s prayer—for Jesus said on another occasion quoting Isaiah 29:13 as recorded in Matthew 15:8:

8 ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

6. Prayer is first and foremost an experience of the heart that can only come from a person who is born-again and who is in fellowship with God for it is — this kind of prayer — that delights God’s heart.

D. We should pray because prayer changes things.

1. In light of the fact that God is sovereign over everything in the universe and that He ultimately “**works all things after the counsel of His will**” (Ephesians 1:11), someone might ask, “**Then why should we pray?**”
2. The simplest answer is that God who created us in His image as free moral agents has ordained—both the ends & the means to accomplish His work.
3. For example, He has ordained for, “**WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED**” (Romans 10:13)—but He has *also ordained* that that His message go out — through Christians sharing it (Romans 10:14).
4. Our God is over all & so He has determined what will happen, as well as the means that will make happen — what He has determined to happen.
5. And so, in the case of prayer, we know that God has ordained that He will make certain things happen — in response to our intercession — which is why God commands us to pray — because prayer changes things.
6. For instance, prayer can make us strong & keep us from sin which is why Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, “**Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.**”
7. We know in the days of King Ahab — that God ordained a drought as a judgment on the nation — to bring about repentance — a drought both whose start and end were ordained by God (1 Kings 17:1–7; 18:41–46).
8. But from the same narrative — as well as James 5:17–18 — we also know that the start & end of the drought occurred as a result of Elijah’s prayer:

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

9. So, in the case of the drought — it was ordained by God to happen and yet — it happened because Elijah prayed — for it to happen.
10. Both God’s sovereign determination — and the prayers of Elijah brought about the start & end to the drought—because God ordained it to happen and He ordained it would be accomplished through the prayers of Elijah.
11. Please understand, it is not that prayer changes God’s mind—for in the case of Elijah the prophet, he was not giving God new information nor was he presenting to God—something that God had not anticipated.

12. Jesus told us, “**for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him**” (Matthew 6:8) and so our prayer — does not alter God’s sovereign plan simply on our say-so — but prayer nonetheless — does change things.
13. And so, in reference to Elijah’s prayer God can promise us, “**The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much**” (James 5:16b).
14. While we may not know God’s eternal, sovereign plan in all its details, but we do know that He works through prayer and answers prayer.
15. We know that as we pray according to His will, He says yes to our requests.

14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him” (1 John 5:14–15).

16. Even when we are uncertain of God’s will—the Spirit of God promises to intercede on our behalf — translating our prayers into God’s will.

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words (Romans 8:26).

17. Sometimes we do not know — what to pray or — how to pray, but God in our “**weakness**” helps us through the Holy Spirit.
18. The intercessory ministry of the **Spirit** in us—through our One intercessor with the **Father** — the Lord Jesus — is a wonderful and assuring picture—of how our prayers—can be answered.
19. When we do not “**know how to pray**” exactly as you should, **God the Holy Spirit** makes intercession “**for us with groanings**” that cannot be uttered.
20. And so, while **Jesus Christ** is our intercessor in the court of **Heaven**, **God the Holy Spirit** is our intercessor “**in the theater**” of our hearts.
21. In summary, we should pray—because God is glorified through prayer, God commands us to pray, God delights in the prayer of the righteous, and we should pray — because prayer truly — changes things.
22. To live our lives in a “**spirit of prayer**” is to live our lives the presence of God under His authority — all the while being able to enjoy God and allowing all the glory and honor—to go to Him who is worthy.

IV. What Should Be Included In Prayer?

While it is impossible to tightly categorize prayer or to dictate a particular order in the kind of prayer we should exercise, prayer can be summarized into five major categories.

A. We should pray with confession.

1. When God saves us, He credits to our person Christ's righteousness giving us a new status before the Lord (Romans 5:1; 2 Cor. 5:21).
2. When God saves us, He not only wipes the slate clean but He also credits to our account Christ's perfection calling us "**holy ones.**"
3. However, as justified "**saints**" (Romans 1:7)—God still calls us to walk in holiness and when—we fail in our practice—to live out our new position, it is essential that we confess any known sin to God in prayer (1 Jn. 1:9):

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

4. There is no set order to the kind of prayers we may offer God.
5. Sometimes we might first go to God with "**confession**" of known sin, while other times we might begin our prayers with praise but then in the process our own sinful hearts are revealed changing our a prayer of "**confession.**"

3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?

4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully (Psalm 24:3–4).

B. We should pray with thanksgiving.

1. The Bible commands us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "**in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**"
2. In the New Testament, there are repeated admonitions to "**give thanks**" to God and so thanksgiving is always — to be a part of our prayers.
3. In similar fashion, the Apostle Paul instructs the Philippians (4:6):

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

4. That "**thankfulness**" should be a regular part of our prayer life is also underscored in Paul's first letter to Timothy when he says (1 Tim. 2:1).

1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men,

5. In life there will always be those things that we can complain about, but if we believe in God's providence working everything **"together for good"** then we will find our hearts filled **"with thanksgiving."**
6. A prayer of **"thanksgiving"** not only express gratitude but faith or trust that God has everything — under His sovereign control (Romans 8:28):

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

7. When we express **"thanksgiving"** to God —we are not only acknowledging our gratitude to Him — but we are acknowledging — that He is in charge, and that, **"without faith it is impossible to please Him"** (Hebrews 11:6).

C. We should pray with worship.

1. A prayer of **"worship"** is similar to the prayer of thanksgiving with difference being — that **"adoration"** focuses on who God is while prayers of **"thanksgiving"** — focus on what God — has done.
2. In the prayer pattern often called **'The Lord's Prayer'** that the Lord Jesus gave to all of His disciples, He instructs us to begin with a focus of worship.

9 **"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name' (Matthew 6:9).**

3. You will often discover that as you focus on who God is that your heart will not only be filled with praise, but that you will be able to approach God with heart believed Him—for the other requests—that you have.
4. We see the disciples first focusing on God's character on the occasion when their lives had been threatened — by the religious officials in Jerusalem.
5. They begin their prayer by first praising God as sustainer over all of creation (4:23), as the One who is sovereign over rulers (4:24-25), and as the One who supervises the events of this world (4:27-28).

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31).
6. Then after they take the time to remember who God is—then and only
are they able to bring their requests believing Him to answer (Acts 4:29-

7. When you and I pray — we need to get our prayers into perspective by
not just asking God for our needs—but by praising God for who He is.

D. We should pray with supplication.

- others,
Psalms
His
supplication.
1. The Hebrew and Greek words — most often translated “**supplication**”
in the Bible literally mean, “**a request or petition**” & so “**supplication**”
is asking God for something—like our daily needs (Matthew 6:11).
 2. Unlike an “**intercessory prayer**” — which is praying — on behalf of
the prayer of “**supplication**” is generally a request for the person praying.
 3. The Bible includes many prayers of “supplication” especially in the
as God’s people ask for mercy (Ps. 4:1), for God’s leading (Ps. 5:8), for
deliverance from enemies (Ps. 6:4) & from persecution (Ps. 7:1) and so on.
 4. Earlier in this session, we studied how Jesus told us not to give up praying
for what we need (Luke 18:1-8) —and James 4:2 reminds us that often we
do not have what we need—for the simple reason—we have never asked.
 5. And so, Paul told the Philippians — that essential to having, “**the peace of
God, which passes all understanding**” — that “**will guard your hearts and
your minds in Christ Jesus**” are by prayers of thanksgiving &

6. Paul told the Philippians — that essential to having — “**the peace of God,
which passes all understanding**”—that “**will guard your hearts and your
minds in Christ Jesus**” takes place by, “**supplication with thanksgiving.**”

**6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication
with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the
peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your
hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6–7).**

7. God loves us and cares about our needs which is why He invites us to ask.

11 “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him (Matthew 7:11)!”

E. We should pray with intercession.

1. Intercessory prayer is the act of praying on behalf of another person.
2. Many times, our prayers include requests for others as we “**intercede**” for them just as Jesus, “**always lives to make intercession for**” us (Heb. 7:25).
3. The whole of Christ’s “**High Priestly Prayer**” in John chapter 17, is a prayer on behalf of His disciples & for all believers to come.
4. Paul reminds us of this ministry of Jesus for us in Romans chapter 8:

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

5. Because of Jesus’ intercessory ministry for us (1 Timothy 2:5), we can now by both example and command — intercede in prayer on behalf of other Christians & for those who are lost — asking for God’s will to be done.
6. *A good example of **intercessory prayer** is seen in Daniel 9 as Daniel intercedes for Israel according to the revealed will of God (2), in a spirit of fervency & humility (3, 5-15), remembering God’s attributes (4,7,9,15) & glory (16-19).*
7. While **intercessory prayer**—can have many expressions—many times like Daniel did — we come to God on behalf of others — recognizing our own shortcomings — while seeking for God’s will to be done.
8. Sadly, in recent decades some evangelical Christians have made those who are committed to **intercessory prayer** to a class of “**super-Christians**” when in reality — all Christians are called to be involved in **intercessory prayer**.

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(25).
9. Clearly, in Acts 12 when Peter was imprisoned, he did not limit his need
prayer to a special class of people, but asked the whole church to pray

10. Likewise, Paul in asking others to pray for him did not limit his request to those with a “**special calling to intercession**” but invited the whole church to pray (Colossians 4:3-4) because intercessory prayer is for all believers.

11. The idea that intercession is the privilege and calling of only some has no biblical foundation and it often leads to a sense of pride & superiority.

12. It is a great thing when we pray for others and when others pray for us.