

Elevate Prayer Material-Revised

ELEVATE

Getting God's Perspective

A Small Group Study on Prayer

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Welcome to Elevate

Prayer was a central part of the life of Jesus and provided Him with the strength, perspective, and direction he needed to accomplish God's mission for Him on earth. Prayer provides the opportunity for us to get God's perspective on all of life's realities. James writes, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." (James 4:10) Looking through the lens in which God sees all things helps to bring our challenges into sharp focus and into proper perspective.

Elevate is a small group curriculum designed to assist believers in their spiritual journey toward a more vibrant, enjoyable, fulfilling, and powerful prayer life. It is our desire to equip, empower, and engage each of you with the tools, resources, and opportunities necessary for a life-changing experience.

During this journey, you will be positioned to connect with God and, as a result, elevated in your prayer life. Each time you meet with your small group you will discuss the topic of prayer, pray for one another, learn together, and draw closer in your relationship with God and others. May God bless you as you pursue Him!

Jesus prayed: "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

Luke 5:16

The church prayed: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Acts 2:42

Our invitation to pray: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13

expecting great things,

The Pastoral Ministries Dept. of Church of the King

Week One - What Is Prayer?

Talking to God

Opening Question

Sometimes we get so involved in an enjoyable conversation that we lose track of time. When was the last time this happened to you? Who were you with and what were you discussing? Did you walk away from that conversation encouraged and inspired?

Lesson

Many believers struggle with the concept of prayer. We're not sure what it is, how it works, or when we should do it. Our goal today is to help clear this up for you. Here's the truth: prayer is simply talking to God. It does not have to be complicated! Even better, God loves you so much that He is eager to speak with you!

The main goal of this study over the next six weeks is to help equip you to grow closer to God through prayer. The following verse expresses this well: "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." John 15:15

Of course, we recognize that talking to God is not like talking with another human being. We can't see God, and it's not always easy to hear what He is saying. Prayer requires faith.

"Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see... Without faith, it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." Hebrew 11:1, 6

"But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30 When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the Lord your God and obey him. For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you." Deuteronomy 4:29-31

When we pray, we are acting on our belief that God exists. After all, if we don't believe God is real, we wouldn't waste time trying to speak to Him! Every time we send a prayer to God, we are operating in faith. We are choosing to believe that the spiritual is just as real as the natural. Even though we can't see or touch God, He is real and we can talk to Him. And, as the verse in Hebrews tells us, that when we use our faith, God is pleased with us.

God is pleased when we pray because our prayers are a way of seeking Him. The Bible tells us that when we seek Him with all of our heart, we will find Him.

"You will call on Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13

Discussion Question

What are some examples from your life that have helped you know that God is real? Do you struggle to believe that God wants to hear your prayers? Why or why not?

Just as we can have different kinds of conversations with others, so too will our prayers differ from day to day. Sometimes we can have a conversation with God as a friend, other times we will worship Him as our Lord and King, and then there are times we turn to Him as our Father who takes care of us. Prayer includes declarations of God's word, singing to Him, laughing with Him, crying to Him, and listening to Him. Sometimes we talk to God about our needs, other times we talk to God about the needs of others.

Discussion Question

What are some of the different kinds of prayer that you have experienced? What might be some new ways that you could begin praying in the coming weeks?

Learning how to pray effectively is not easy. It takes time and faithfulness. Fortunately, Jesus set the example for us. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus prayed constantly. The Bible tells us that He continues to pray for us now while He is in heaven. Here are some examples of the different ways that Jesus prayed:

He laid His hands on children and prayed for them. (Matthew 19:13)

He prayed for the food before they ate it. (Matthew 14:19)

He laid hands on the sick. (Luke 13:13)

He prayed for Himself. (John 17:1-5)

He prayed for His disciples. (John 17: 6-19)

He prayed for us. (John 17:20-26)

He prayed the night He was betrayed. (Matthew 26:36- 44)

He prayed for the people who hung Him on the cross. (Luke 23:34)

When it comes down to it, there is nothing that we can't bring to God in prayer. No need is too small; no problem is too big for God to handle.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen." Ephesians 3:20-21

Discussion Question

When was the last time you felt overwhelmed and brought that situation to God in prayer? What was the result?

Over the next six weeks, you are going to have an opportunity to take your biggest needs and bring them to God in prayer. Your small group will be praying with you. Together, you will see God move and answer your prayers in a powerful way!

Small Group Prayer

In an upcoming lesson, we will learn more about how God answers prayers. For now, we are going to start with a prayer that God loves to answer. As we learned in this lesson, God loves us more than we can comprehend, and He wants to spend time with us in prayer. He loves it when we ask Him to help us get to know Him better. As a small group, pray the following prayer together, with the confidence that God will answer it for you.

Heavenly Father, I come before You today with a desire to know You more. Thank You for creating me. Thank You for all of the many blessings You have given me. I want to grow closer to You. I want to better understand how much You love me, and how You want to be my friend. I'm asking You to teach me how to pray more effectively. I am inviting You to come into my life and do whatever it takes to help me with this. My desire is to obey Your Word and to live a life that honors You. Thank You in advance for all that You are going to do in the next few weeks. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Assignment

This week, take time to identify three needs you are currently facing. These could be related to anything: family, health, finances, job, etc. Write these needs in the blanks provided below, and commit to pray for them every day this week:

1.

2.

3.

Week Two – Why Do We Pray?

Connecting with God

Opening Question

What was something that you learned from doing last week's assignment?

Think back to a time when you had to make a big request from someone. This could be asking someone for a favor, seeking permission for something important, or for married men, the moment you asked your wife to marry you. How did you feel before making the request? Was your request granted?

Lesson

Last week, we learned that prayer is talking to God. We also learned that God wants to talk to us because He loves us more than we can comprehend. This week, we are going to look at reasons why we pray. When you look at what the Bible has to say about prayer, you discover that God's purpose for prayer is not what you might expect.

Before diving into this lesson, it's important to address a common objection that is raised regarding prayer. Instead of asking, "Why do we pray?", some of us may be asking, "Why should I pray?" In other words, some of us may be struggling to believe that prayer is worth our time and effort. Some reasons that we may become discouraged with prayer could include:

We aren't really sure where to start when it comes to prayer.

We have tried prayer in the past but have never been able to do it consistently.

In the past, we've prayed for something, and feel like God didn't answer our prayer.

We struggle to believe that God really loves us and that He wants to hear our prayers.

If any of these statements describe your attitude towards prayer, be encouraged! This lesson is designed to help you better understand why God wants us to pray to Him. Let's look at what the Bible teaches us about the "why" of prayer.

3 Reasons Why We Pray:

We pray because prayer changes our perspective.

This is a very important point that can revolutionize our prayer life. We don't pray to change God's mind – we pray to change our mind. Prayer is not

about getting God to solve our problems; it's about letting God show us His perspective on our situation.

There is nothing like a trial or challenge to motivate us to pray. When we are dealing with stress, uncertainty, and tragedy, we quickly become aware of our dependence on God to get us through. Typically, when we are in a trial, we have the desired outcome that we want to see come to pass. We want to see our loved one healed from sickness. We want to see our financial crisis resolved. We want our broken heart to be healed. We want to see our family member restored.

When we are dealing with difficult circumstances, it is critical that we take them to God in prayer. However, we can run into challenges if we believe that the goal of prayer is to convince God to answer our prayer! We may think, "If I can only pray hard enough, God will listen and fix this situation!"

This is where we can begin to run into trouble with our prayer. While it is good to bring our difficult circumstances to God, we need to be careful in our attitude towards God when we do this. Let's remember a few important things about God:

God is eternal (Revelation 22:13) – this means that God exists outside of time. For God, there is no past, present, or future. He sees every moment in time. This means that God already knows how our situation is going to turn out.

God is all-knowing (Psalm 139:1-6) – this means that God literally knows everything. He knows exactly what we are going through, and He knows exactly what we need to get through our difficult circumstances.

God is love (I John 4:8) – God doesn't just know what's best for us – He wants what is best for us. He wants to bless us even in the most difficult trials we face.

Understanding these important attributes of God will radically change our approach to prayer. Instead of feeling like we need to convince God to listen to us, we can instead come to Him knowing that He already has the perfect solution for us.

Instead of praying "God, please do this or that for me," we can instead go to God and say to Him "Heavenly Father, you know the challenge that I am

facing right now. Please show me your heart in this situation and teach me how I can see my difficult circumstances from your perspective."

Discussion Question

How does this point affect your understanding of prayer? Have you ever tried asking God to change your perspective on something? Explain.

We pray because it builds our faith.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1

When God changes our perspective, it builds our faith. This passage in Hebrews shows us that faith comes when we see things not as they currently are, but as they will become.

Simply put, faith comes when we begin to see our difficult circumstances from God's perspective. Instead of struggling with anxiety and doubt, we begin to experience peace and hope, knowing that even in the most challenging trials, God is in control.

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." I Peter 1:6-7

This passage from I Peter shows us how God can use our difficult circumstances to strengthen our faith. It shows that when we are tested by trials, our faith is purified like gold. When jewelers work with gold, they purify it by subjecting it to extreme heat. Because gold can withstand very high temperatures, the jeweler will heat the gold to the point where all other impurities are burned off, leaving pure gold behind. God does the same thing with us. While difficult circumstances are unpleasant, God uses them to purify our faith. If we pray for God to give us His perspective in our trials, we can come out of them with our faith stronger.

Discussion Question

Can you see how God is using your difficult circumstances to strengthen your faith? How does this give you a different perspective on your trials?

Prayer connects us to God.

God wants to change our perspective because He wants us to draw closer to Him. The more we see our circumstances from His perspective, the better we understand God's nature and love toward us.

Sometimes, we experience trials so painful that there is simply no easy solution. We are dealing with tragedy, pain, and loss so great that it is impossible to see how God might be using these circumstances for our good. In those moments of extreme darkness, we can call on the love of God to sustain us.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18

If you are in a difficult moment like this, prayer can be the lifeline you need to get through it. Sometimes, all we can pray is "God, help me!" A simple prayer like this can be very powerful. By crying out to God for help, we are acknowledging our complete dependence on Him, and relying on His unconditional love to sustain us.

Discussion Question

Have you ever experienced a dark moment like this? How did God help you get through it?

Small Group Prayer

We can take a step right now to begin to allow God to change our perspective. Let's pray together that God would help us see our difficult circumstances through His eyes. As a small group, pray the following prayer together, with the confidence that God will answer it for you:

Heavenly Father, you know the trials that I am facing. You know the difficulties that I am experiencing. I am so thankful that you are more than able to deal with every circumstance that I face. I pray that You would begin to change my perspective on my trials. Show me what You are doing in the midst of my difficult circumstances. Teach me how you are strengthening my faith. I cry out for Your sustaining love to carry me through. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Assignment

This week, go back to the prayer needs that you identified last week. Commit to spending time in prayer every day this week lifting up these needs. Each day, ask God to give you His perspective on each of these

situations. Take time to write down how your perspective changes over the course of the week.

Week Three – How Can We Pray?

Understanding Righteousness

Opening Question

What has God been showing you through the times you have spent in prayer?

Share about a time when you received VIP treatment for something (e.g., special tickets to a game or concert, behind-the-scenes tour, an opportunity to meet someone famous). How did this special treatment make you feel?

Lesson

Last week, we talked about the power of prayer that can change us. Hopefully this week you have a new perspective on some of the circumstances you're dealing with. This week, we are going to talk about how we pray. This lesson may be an opportunity for you to learn some new ways to speak to God.

To understand how we are able to speak directly with God, we need to understand a very important concept called "righteousness." Righteousness is a word that gets used often in Christianity, but we may not necessarily know what it means. However, when we grasp the power of our righteousness in Christ, it can change us.

A simple definition of righteousness is "behavior and attitude that reflect God's character." The Bible makes it clear that God is pleased with righteousness, and that righteous people will be blessed. Even better, God desires to spend time with righteous people. Our righteousness, therefore, is the key to our prayer life. Righteousness is a requirement to be able to stand before God and speak with Him.

This is where things start to get sticky. Because we all know that even on our best day, we think and do things that aren't pleasing to God. We all struggle with sin at some level, no matter how long we've been following God. Therefore, we can't count on our own ability to be righteous. We can never stand before God in prayer on the basis of our own good behavior and efforts.

Before we get discouraged, this is where Jesus comes in. The Bible tells us that when Jesus lived on the earth, He never committed a sin. His entire life was a perfect reflection of God's righteousness. Then, when Jesus died on the cross, He died on our behalf. We all deserve to die for our sins, but Jesus died in our place! This is the miracle of salvation through Christ. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, we not only get forgiveness for our sins and eternal life, we also get Christ's righteousness! Look at this passage:

"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Corinthians 5:21

Pay attention to this powerful point: When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we receive Christ's righteousness. This means that when God looks at us, He sees us as righteous men and women who are fully qualified to stand before Him in prayer! Because of the righteousness we inherited from Jesus, we can pray without any hindrance or limitation.

"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16

Christ's righteousness is like the VIP access we talked about to open up this lesson! Because of Jesus, we can get behind-the-scenes access to God. Our ability to stand before God is not dependent on our behavior or efforts. There is nothing that holds us back from being able to pray.

Discussion Question

How does this lesson change the way you understand righteousness? How might your prayer life change if you fully understand our access to God?

Now that we've clarified our standing in God's eyes, let's look at some different ways that we can pray. At this point, it's helpful to think back to our very first lesson where we established that prayer is a conversation with God. Think for a moment about your closest relationships – this could be your spouse, parent, family member, or best friend. Do you converse with this person in exactly the same way every time you talk? Absolutely not! Your conversations with your most trusted relationships will vary depending on the circumstances and your mood. Likewise, our times of prayer with God should be different. One of the most common ways that we struggle in our prayer life comes when we try to pray the exact same way every day. Can

you imagine trying to have the exact same conversation with your best friend every day?

The Bible describes many different facets of prayer. The six of the most common are:

Petitions – A petition describes the requests we present to God. As His children, we can ask Him to help us in all our circumstances, knowing that He loves us and wants what is best for us! Jesus told the following parable to illustrate the power of petitions:

'Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time, he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:1-8

The lesson we can learn from the "persistent widow" is that we should never give up on our prayers! Sometimes, God's answers to our prayers come more slowly than we want, and it can be easy to give up. However, when we persevere and continue to pray, even when things appear impossible, God will come through.

When looking at petitions, it is important to remember our lesson last week. The point of prayer is that it changes our perspective. Sometimes, God will answer our request by showing us that our request is wrong.

For example, Bill works in the oil and gas industry. The economy took a downturn, and he began to pray faithfully to keep his job only to lose it in the latest round of layoffs. Did that mean God ignored Bill's prayer? No! Because after trusting Him as he transitioned jobs, God ended up blessing Bill with an even better job than he had before. Bill's petition to keep his job was not God's best plan for him – God had something better lined up. But by offering up his petition faithfully, Bill was positioning himself to receive God's best. His perspective changed through the process, and he grew stronger in his relationship with God.

Discussion Question Why do you think God wants us to petition him? When God responds, what does that do to our understanding of God?

Praise & Thanksgiving – This describes our efforts to thank God for who He is, and what He has done for us.

"Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name." Psalm 100:4

Sometimes, we will feel like we have nothing in our lives to give thanks for. However, this is simply not true. No matter how difficult our circumstances, we have something to be grateful for. Taking a moment to thank God for the blessings that we have can help take our mind off of our trials.

Discussion Question Name 3 things you are most grateful for. How does giving God thanks impact your prayers?

Listening – Sometimes, we don't need to say anything to God. Instead, we can just quiet ourselves and listen to Him!

"My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." Proverbs 2:1-5

Listening to God can be harder than it sounds. It takes practice to quiet oneself and simply listen. But when you allow God to begin to speak to you, your life will never be the same.

Discussion Question Describe the last time you know God spoke to you. What difference has that made in your life?

Intercession – This describes the prayers that we offer on behalf of others. It is very important that we not fall into the habit of only praying for our own needs. We live in a lost and hurting world and there are many situations all around us that need prayer. The Bible is filled with stories where Christians prayed for those in need and God came through with a miracle.

"So, Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him." Acts 12:5-10

Discussion Question When you know someone is praying for you what does that mean to you? Have you ever prayed for someone and God answered that prayer for you?

Fasting – This describes the process where we give up something significant in order to spend more time in prayer. Fasting typically involves going without food for a period of time and using the time not spent eating to pray. Fasting can also involve other things, such as giving up social media or television.

Fasting takes us out of our regular routine and helps shut out the everyday distractions of our busy lives. When we fast, God moves on our behalf. Luke 2 describes a woman named Anna. She was in her eighties when Jesus was born. She had been crying out to God for many years to send His Messiah to bring salvation to the world. Note how fasting was a regular part of her prayer life:

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took [Jesus] to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. Luke 2:22, 36-38

Anna's fasting and devotion to prayer allowed her to see her prayers for the Messiah to be answered in her lifetime.

Discussion Question Is fasting a part of your walk with God? How do you think fasting would impact you?

Heavenly Prayer Language – As Christians, the Holy Spirit lives inside each of us. God wants us to be filled with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit every day. He gives us access to God's power through something called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. When we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, we are given the ability to pray in a new language – a heavenly prayer language. This language gives us a powerful new way to pray.

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans." Romans 8:26

"But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life." Jude 20-21

Our heavenly prayer language gives us the ability to pray God's perfect will for our life, even if we don't know what to pray for!

This is a complicated topic that we don't have time to delve into in this study. However, you can learn a lot more about this exciting gift from God in our Freedom and Biblical Foundations small group studies.

Discussion Question

Are you familiar with all these different kinds of prayer? Which one do you think would be most beneficial to you in your current circumstances?

Small Group Prayer

Let's put this week's lesson into practice. As a small group, we are going to spend time offering praise & thanksgiving to God. Ask everyone in the group to identify at least one thing they are thankful for in their lives. Close the group by spending time thanking God for what He has done.

Assignment

This week, you will once again revisit the prayer needs that you identified in the first week. This week, you are going to employ the different aspects of prayer that we learned about in this week's lesson.

Each day this week, take time to pray for your specific prayer requests. Each day, pick one of the aspects of prayer that we learned about and put it into practice:

Petitions – Pour out your heart to God, asking Him to answer your prayer requests with boldness. Ask Him to change your perspective so that you can see your circumstances through His eyes.

Praise & Thanksgiving – Spend time thanking God for the needs you are facing. If you are going through a difficult trial, thank God that He is walking with You through this situation, and give thanks in advance that He is going to bring His perfect will to pass.

Listening – Limit the amount of time that you talk to God; instead, quiet yourself and listen to what He has to say about your prayer needs. Write down what He tells you.

Intercession – Commit to spending your entire prayer time lifting up the needs of others.

Fasting – Come up with a plan to fast something for one day – you might want to skip one meal. Spend extra time in prayer to God while you fast.

Heavenly Prayer Language – Ask God to baptize you in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. If you have received your heavenly prayer language, put it to use, knowing that when you use it, you are praying God's perfect will over your prayer needs. If you haven't yet received your language, it's ok! Ask God to show you more about this powerful gift. You can talk to your small group host if you want to learn more about this.

Week Four - Praying the Word

Revelation, Meditation, Declaration

"My word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Isaiah 55:10

Opening Question

From last week's lesson, which type of prayer do you connect with the most?

Describe someone you know who is true to their word (e.g., when they say they will do something, they follow through on it). What do you appreciate about someone who is faithful in this way?

This week, we are going to talk about the most powerful tool we have for our prayer life – the Bible. We've already been spending a lot of time looking at Scripture for this study, but today we are going to unlock the power of Scripture in our prayer lives.

To begin, let's talk about why the Bible is so special. There are many great books that have been written over the centuries, but none of them can be compared to Scripture. The Bible is special in several ways:

It is inspired – The Bible was written by God. He used men to write the books of the Bible, but all of these men wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who told them what to write. The Bible is not a collection of good thoughts, it reveals God's perfect thoughts.

It is infallible – The Bible is completely true. While we may not fully understand every passage in Scripture, we can rest in the knowledge that God does not make mistakes. We can put our trust in what the Bible has to say about our lives.

It is infinite – The Bible contains everything we need to confront every challenge life throws at us. No matter our situation, we can find help and comfort in the Scripture.

Viewed in this light, we can appreciate what an amazing gift the Bible is for us! The Bible is not an ordinary book – it is an extraordinary gift that contains the power to transform our lives.

Throughout history, God has used words to accomplish His purposes. With words, God spoke the entire universe into being. (Hebrews 11:3).

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light." Genesis 1:1-3

With words, He communicates to us.

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." Genesis 17:1-2

Jesus is the living Word of God. Jesus came to Earth to model what it looks like when the Bible is put into action. Every single thing Jesus did was in line with God's commands – His life is a living example of God's Word.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

God's Word brings us life – an abundant, supernatural, contented life. Jesus came to give life and His words are life to those who find them! Psalm 1 speaks of the blessed man:

"His delight is in the law [the word] of the LORD, and in His law, he meditates day and night." Psalm 1:2

Discussion Question

How does our discussion today change the way you look at the Bible? How have you been transformed by the power of God's Word?

How to Pray with the Bible

As you can see, the Bible is an incredibly powerful tool that we can use in all things – including prayer. Let's take a look at three ways that we can use Scripture to unlock God's power in our prayer life.

Revelation

The first way we can use Scripture in our prayer life is through what we call revelation. A good definition of the word revelation is "A surprising and previously unknown fact, especially one that is made known in a dramatic way." Think back to a time when you learned something that suddenly changed your life. The truth may have been right under your nose the entire time, but until your eyes were opened, you couldn't see it. However, once you recognized reality, chances are your perspective changed dramatically. And – as we've said many times in this study, one of the most important outcomes in prayer is a changed perspective on our circumstances!

"The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple." Psalm 119:130

As this passage says – we don't have to be a Biblical scholar to draw understanding from Scripture. The Holy Spirit can give us revelation if we ask God for it.

When we pray, we are typically seeking God for an answer to something. Through the power of revelation, we can receive the answer to our prayer from God's Word! As we discussed earlier in this lesson – God's Word is infinite – it contains all of the information we need to navigate the challenges of life. Therefore, we can know with confidence that the answers to our questions can be found on the pages of the Bible!

When we seek God for answers, we can ask Him to lead us to a passage of Scripture that addresses our need. It is amazing how God's Word can bring comfort, encouragement, and clarity in all situations. Sometimes, God will speak to us through a new passage; other times, He will show us something new from a passage we've read many times before.

Discussion Question What does God's word reveal about Him?
Share a time when God revealed something to you in His word that really encouraged you.

Meditation

The word meditation typically evokes the image of someone seated on the floor cross-legged chanting a phrase over and over. Unfortunately, in contemporary culture, most meditation practiced is based on the teachings of other religions than on Christianity. However, what is not as well known is that Christianity has its own form of meditation. For us, meditation is all about the Bible. You'll remember last week we learned about listening prayer – where we spend less time talking to God and more time listening to what He has to say to us. Meditation is similar to this. When we meditate, we allow God to speak to us through His Word! Let's go back to Psalm 1 again:

"Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his Law Day and night." Psalm 1:1-2

Meditation is not a quick reading of the Scripture. Instead, it is a slow, prayerful way of reading. When we meditate, we pick a passage of Scripture and read through it slowly. As we read, we ask God to speak to us through His Word.

As the passage in Psalms says, meditation can last through the entire day and night. You can actually practice meditation throughout your day. Many believers read the Bible in the morning, and then forget about what they read. But if you make an effort to keep thinking throughout the day about what you read in the morning, you can get much more out of God's Word. Taking moments here and there throughout the day to meditate keeps you connected to God and allows Him to speak to you in new ways.

Discussion Question Is it difficult for you to slow down and take time to meditate? How could you make this be a disciplined practice in your walk with God?

Declaration

The third way we can incorporate God's Word into our prayer life is through declarations. A declaration is a fancy way of saying, "Reading the Bible out loud."

Why should we worry about reading the Bible out loud? Remember, as we learned earlier in this lesson, God spoke the world into existence. There is immense power in the spoken Word of God. Let's look again at Isaiah 55:10:

"My word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

This is a powerful passage! When God speaks something, His Words are never empty. He is always true to His Word. His promises always come to pass.

Many times, we are challenged as believers to trust in what God says, as opposed to what the world says. God says to obey His commands. The world says to do whatever feels good. The world tells us we need relationships, money, and status to be happy; God says that true satisfaction is found only in Him.

When we are facing difficult circumstances, it can be hard to see things from God's perspective. This is where the Word of God can be so powerful. The Bible is infallible – it is God's truth. Therefore, we can use it to help

shut out the many voices the world throws at us and focus on the voice of God.

When God speaks to you through His Word, you can begin to declare His Word over your life. By speaking key passages of Scripture over your life, you are taking a step of faith to believe that God's Word is true, even if your circumstances don't seem that way. This is not a magic formula – we're not talking about speaking something out loud and expecting an immediate change. Sometimes, people will get the wrong idea, thinking that if they simply declare a verse over and over, God will answer their prayers. Remember what we learned earlier – God will answer our prayers in the manner He thinks is best, not us. Declarations are powerful because they provide a way for us to line up our faith in God by speaking His Word, declaring it to be true. We are actively participating in the process of letting God change our perspective on our circumstances.

Discussion Question Describe a time when you declared God's word over your situation. What happened as a result?

Have you ever put any of these techniques (meditation, revelation, declaration) into practice? How did it impact your prayer life?

Small Group Prayer

Let's put this week's lesson into practice. As a small group, we are going to pray with the Word of God. Have everyone in the group share a prayer need. After each person shares a need, let the group identify at least one Bible verse that speaks to that need. Spend time in prayer as a group speaking these verses over the members of your small group.

Assignment

This week, you are going to pray for the same prayer needs as you have in previous weeks, but this time you will focus on praying with the Word of God.

Ask God to speak to you about your prayer needs through His Word (revelation).

When you get revelation, take time to meditate on this truth so that your perspective can change.

Also, commit to declaring the Word of God taking appropriate passages of Scripture that speak to your situation.

Week Five - Praying in Faith

Faith, Hope, Trust

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Hebrews 11:1

Opening Question

Share one of the 3 prayer disciplines that you applied during your personal prayer time with God last week.

In the busyness of everyday life, it is easy to take things for granted. We live in a society filled with amazing things that we often overlook. For example, not that long ago, we relied on landlines and the postal service to communicate with each other. Today, many of us have a smartphone that provides an instantaneous connection to the world. What are some other examples of amazing things that we take for granted?

Faith

This week, we are going to explore the topic of faith and the role it plays in prayer. The word "faith" is used a lot by Christians, but we may not necessarily know what it truly means. However, a deeper understanding of what faith is and how it works can unlock a new level of power in our prayer life.

A simple definition of faith is this: "Faith is a decision to see our circumstances from God's perspective instead of man's perspective." True faith always moves the believer to action.

Our God is all-powerful. There is no one and nothing in all of Creation that compares to Him. He knows everything, and He is in control of all things. This is why as believers, we try to align our lives with God's will. God knows what is best for us, and when we trust Him, He takes care of everything.

The challenge comes when we can't easily see things from God's perspective. Perhaps you are facing a major trial or maybe there are people around you who are trying to convince you that God's perspective is not true. It is in these moments of difficulty where faith can change everything. Making the decision to believe in God's perspective instead of our own will give us the peace and confidence we need to walk through all circumstances.

In Week 3, we looked at the story of Bill who had lost his job and was praying for a new one. If it takes a while before God provides Bill with his new job, then Bill will face a decision. Will he trust that God is in control even when the bills keep coming and his job applications keep getting turned down?

Bill can choose to embrace his limited perspective on this situation, in which case he will struggle with anxiety and uncertainty about the future or he can put his faith in God. Philippians 4:19 says, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Bill can choose to believe that God is taking care of him, even if he doesn't know how God will do this. If Bill makes a decision to live by faith instead of fear and anxiety, he can experience peace and even excitement at what God has planned for him.

Interestingly enough, most believers find it easy to have faith in the big things but struggle to have faith in the small things. Most of us don't really question the fact that God created the universe, even though the immensity and complexity of creation boggle the mind. Most believers don't question the fact that God sent His Son Jesus to die for our sins, even though salvation is the greatest miracle in history. However, as soon as we run into some financial difficulties, or have an argument with our spouse, or come down with the flu, almost immediately, we start questioning God's love for us! This is because faith is a matter of perspective. The big things are out of our control, so we can easily trust God with them. But the small things trip us up because we think somehow, we can control our situation and know better than God what we need.

Praying with faith helps reorient our perspective. It centers us in the will of God, anchored in His love. As we learned last week, the best source to gain God's perspective is the Bible. We can use the Word of God to speak faith over our circumstances and trials.

Discussion Question

What areas of your life do you struggle to see from God's perspective? How can faith help you in these areas?

Hope

Another concept that helps us understand faith is hope. The Bible teaches us that faith and hope are woven together. We have full faith in God; therefore, we have hope in every circumstance. At times, we hope for the desired outcome to a circumstance, but we trust God's wisdom no matter the outcome. As Abraham said, "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25)

A simple definition of biblical hope is "a joyful confident expectation that God will always respond according to His wisdom and His mercy."

Hope describes our personal desires that God would answer our prayers. When we bring our circumstances to God, we are anticipating a certain outcome, but our trust is in Him that He will do what is best in our circumstances. The Bible describes hope this way:

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." Hebrews 6:19

Hope is an anchor for us – it gives us comfort and assurance that we can trust God in all things.

Let's go back to our friend Bill, who is trusting God for a new job. One day, Bill learns from a friend about a job opening at a fortune 500 company that seems like a good fit for him. After sending in an application, Bill prays that God would give him this job. Bill is hoping that God will open this door for him. Over the next few days, Bill and the members of his small group pray for this opportunity. Bill really wants this job, but when he sees his friend again, he learns the position was filled. Bill is deeply disappointed for a bit but quickly remembers his hope is not in a job or a circumstance. His hope is in the Lord.

Later the same day, Bill reads about a small company in the area looking for talent. Initially, Bill dismisses the opportunity thinking it could not possibly provide the stability and income he needs. But he begins to sense he should put in an application for the job. Bill again turns to his small group to join him in prayer over this potential position. God speaks to Bill that this is the position God has reserved for him. Members of Bill's small group confirm with Bill their sense God wants him to have this job. Bill begins to pray with faith for the growth of the company, as well as, for his future bosses and coworkers.

A couple of weeks go by and Bill hears nothing from the startup, but Bill has heard from the Lord. He keeps praying in faith for his new position. Finally, Bill receives a call to come in for an interview with the owners. Bill's interview goes great. He learns the owners are a married couple of deep faith who want to foster a spiritual work environment and plan to give 10% of their new company's profits to dig water wells in third-world countries. God's will comes to pass, and he receives an offer for the job!

As you can see from this story, the key to faith is to be able to hear God's voice. Scripture tells us this in Romans 10:17:

"So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

As we spend time in prayer and in the Word of God, we can hear His voice, and our hope turns into faith.

The process of transitioning from hope to faith is easier in some circumstances than in others. There are some situations we face where the Word of God is very clear. For example, dealing with fear. The Bible is full of passages that tell us that we do not need to struggle with fear.

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves torment." John 4:18

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." Timothy 1:7

Therefore, when we are struggling with fear, we know that fear does not come from God, and we can quickly begin to speak with faith as God reminds us that we already have victory over fear. Other areas are less certain. Some situations we face are not as "black and white." They are complicated, and God's will may not become clear for a while. A common example of this is praying for physical healing. Sometimes, you or someone you love may be battling a serious illness. From Scripture, we know that Jesus paid the price for healing and that God has the ability to heal all sicknesses.

"Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your disease." Psalm 103:2-3

However, Scripture also tells us this:

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." Hebrews 9:27-28

Combining these two verses, we begin to understand that God can heal any sickness, but at the same time we live in a fallen world and eventually everyone does die of something. When we or a loved one are facing death, we can and should pray with hope that God will bring healing, because we always have this hope: "The Judge of all the earth will do right." Only when God has specifically spoken to us that He is going to miraculously heal the person battling sickness can we pray over someone and speak with complete certainty that God is going to heal the sick.

This is a difficult topic to discuss, but it is vitally important. Many believers have encountered massive disappointment by misunderstanding hope and faith. Remember, we always have hope in God and trust His plan. We believe He can do all things and trust Him no matter what His will is. We understand we have a limited knowledge of God's grand plan. He is fully aware and fully in control of His plan. Again, our hope is not in an outcome. Our hope is in the Lord. As painful as it may be to think of a loved one dying, it is better to wait on the Lord with hope in Him until He speaks and reveals His will to us before we begin to claim God's supernatural healing. However, if He does speak, then we can stand in faith that healing is coming, regardless of what the medical reports say!

Discussion Question

Do you think it is important to place your hope in the Lord and not in an outcome when you pray? In what area are you currently praying with hope while waiting to hear from God? If God does not answer your prayer in the way that you would like, does it definitely mean you lacked faith? Could it mean that your desired outcome did not fit God's grand plan?

Trust

At the end of the day, faith is ultimately about trust. By choosing to see things from God's perspective, we are choosing to put our trust in God. We are trusting that God is in control and that He knows what is best for us and that He will work everything out according to His timing.

One very powerful way to pray in faith is to thank God in advance for something that hasn't happened yet. For example:

"Thank you, God, for giving me victory over my fear and anxiety. Your Word says that Your perfect love casts out all fear."

"Thank you, God, that You are providing for all of my needs. I don't know how my bills are going to be paid, but I am trusting You to take care of me."

"Thank you, God, that no matter what happens in this difficult situation, I know that You will take care of me and will never leave me."

Discussion Question
God?

How does trust shape our relationship with

Small Group Prayer

Have everyone in the group pray for each other by speaking faith over the group's prayer needs. Thank God in advance for the good things that He is going to do!

Assignment

By this time, you have all been praying for your designated prayer requests for four weeks. It is time to begin declaring in faith what God is going to do in each of these situations!

This week, take time to summarize everything that God has spoken to you about each of the prayer needs you've been focused on in this study. Write down what God is speaking to you, using Scripture whenever possible. Now, begin to pray in faith that God is going to accomplish what He has promised you!

For some of your prayer needs, God may not have spoken yet. If this is the case, don't worry. God will reveal His will in His perfect timing. If this is the case, continue to pray with hope that God will speak to you and will help change your perspective.

Week Six - Praying for Others

Perspective, Community, Kingdom

"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people." 1 Timothy 2:1

Opening Question

Of the 3 aspects of prayer (faith, trust, hope), which did you think you learned the most about?

Name someone you know who is committed to helping other people. How have you and others been impacted by this person's willingness to focus on the needs of those around them?

Congratulations! We've made it to the final week of this study. By now, most of us have experienced real transformation as a result of our time spent praying. Our focus for the past five weeks has been on connecting with God as we lift up our personal prayer needs to Him. In our final lesson this week, we are going to shift our focus away from ourselves as we learn more about praying for the needs of others.

Perspective

In this study, we've spent a lot of time talking about how prayer can change our perspective. The more we allow God to change our perspective, the

more we will begin to experience His transformation in our lives. The more we experience His transformation, the more we will begin to enjoy the abundant life that Jesus talked about in John 10:10.

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly."
John 10:10

Prayer is the key that unlocks abundant life. Hopefully, you are in a better position today than you were five weeks ago to enjoy more of the many blessings that God has for you.

One of the greatest ways to continue allowing God to change our perspective is by spending some portion of our prayer time lifting up the needs of others. Obviously, we will always come to God with our personal needs, because He cares deeply about us and wants to speak to us about our circumstances. However, we don't want to become consumed with our own problems.

Let's look again at I Timothy 2:1, found at the top of this week's lesson. This is the apostle Paul writing here, talking about the importance of praying for others. Take note of the verb he uses in this sentence – "urge." Paul is not politely suggesting that we pray for others, he is imploring us to do this. There is a sense of "urgency" to his statement. Why? Paul understood the impact of praying for others.

When we make the decision to shift our focus away from our needs and towards the needs of others, something changes in our perspective. We are no longer consumed with our difficult circumstances. We begin to recognize that there are others out there who are also facing challenges. We may even come to see that our trials are not nearly as challenging as we thought they were.

Let's look at a dramatic real-life example of how this can work. Pastor Jim Laffoon is a teaching pastor and has influenced many in the body of Christ. Many years ago, Pastor Jim received devastating news about his wife Cathy who was diagnosed with brain cancer. Pastor Jim was faced with the possibility of losing his wife, leaving his young children without a mother. After the doctors delivered this terrible news, he had to leave Cathy at the hospital and drive some distance home to take care of his children. As he got in the car, he expected to spend the drive praying about this difficult situation. However, as he started the car, he felt God say to him, "for the duration of your ride home, I only want you to pray for other people, not yourself." Pastor Jim Laffoon was obedient and spent the next hour praying

for people in his church, and other friends he knew around the world. As he continued to do this, he began to feel an incredible peace come over him about Cathy's health. As he pulled into his driveway, God again spoke to him, and said, "Don't worry about Cathy. I am going to remove this tumor and bring complete healing to her." When he got into his car, he felt fear and discouragement. When he got out of the car, his perspective had completely changed. Sure enough, Cathy was healed and today they enjoy many decades of marriage, lots of grandchildren, and an amazing ministry that has touched people all over the world.

Discussion Question

Do you believe that praying for others makes a difference in their lives? How could praying, for others, change your perspective on your own challenges?

Community

Another reason that praying for others is important is because it strengthens our relationships with other believers. God did not create us to be lonely. He desires that all of His children be part of a healthy, life-giving community of believers:

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land." Psalm 68:5-6

We were created, by God, to be in a relationship with other believers. We need life-giving relationships to stay encouraged and focused on God. When we try to follow God on our own, things get a lot more difficult.

One of the best ways to build strong relationships with our spiritual family is to pray for each other. When we pray for each other, we are serving one another:

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves." Philippians 2:3-4

When we pray for others, we are making the statement that their needs and circumstances are important to us. This is why our small groups always end with a time of prayer. When a small group prays together, its members grow closer to each other.

Discussion Question

How has praying for others helped strengthen your relationship with them? What are some ways that we as a small group can do more to pray for each other?

God's Kingdom

The third reason that praying for others is so important is because it connects us with God's kingdom. As Christians, we are part of God's plan to advance the good news about Jesus to the entire world:

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

When Jesus' time on Earth came to a close, he left us with one final command, which is often called the "Great Commission." God does not want anyone to miss the opportunity to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord. He is working to build His kingdom on the Earth so that people from all nations and walks of life can come into a relationship with Him.

Although it might seem hard to believe, God wants us to play a role in the advancement of His kingdom! He wants to use us to help spread the Gospel to the lost. One of the most important ways that we can participate in this is by praying for others. When we take time to pray not just for our friends and family, but for people who we don't even know, then we begin to appreciate just how much God is doing around the world.

In addition to praying for our personal needs, and the needs of those we know, we should also spend time praying regularly for the lost. This might include:

Praying for people in our community who don't know God

Praying for our nation, that many would make God their Lord and Savior

Praying for other nations around the world, particularly those where very few people currently believe in God

When you make a decision to start praying like this, get ready! You will find that praying for God's kingdom will take you on an exciting adventure, even if you never leave your home.

Congratulations again on completing this study! May this be a starting point for a lifetime of incredible prayer and intimacy with God.

Discussion Question What are some biblical discoveries you learned through this small group curriculum? How do you plan on applying these?

Small Group Prayer

Have everyone in the group take turns praying for each other. Celebrate all that God has done in your group over the past six sessions!

Next Steps

Commit to making prayer a central part of your life.

Connect with the "prayer movement."

Choose to host a small group.

Continue on to Elevate Part II.

For more information about prayer

Go to:

www.churchoftheking.com/prayer

To submit prayer requests or to "Join the Movement"

Go to:

prayer@churchoftheking.com

