

WEEK 5 - HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

DAY 1

We no longer have any reason for saying that we do not know what to pray for. We have just spent a whole week talking about all the things that need our prayers. Let me write down the four kinds of things we should pray for. You write the other things under them.

1. We should pray for ourselves. What should we pray for for ourselves?

2. We should pray for the people around us. Who are they? (Do not forget the ones who lead us and the ones who hate us.)

3. We should pray for the church. Who are the ones to be prayed for in the church?

4. We should pray for God to have the victory over Satan's power. What should we ask for when we are praying for this?

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So we have a very big work as Christians. It seems almost more than we can do. How shall we do this work of praying? We found many verses in the Bible which tell us what to pray for. Again, there are many verses which tell how to pray.

Notice what God told his people through the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 29:13:

When you seek me, you shall find me; if you search with all your heart.

5. Which words in this verse show how we should seek for God?

Do people sometimes pray but not with the whole heart? Yes, sometimes they pray only with words which come from their mouths. They do not really feel the things which they are saying. They seem to pray only because they are told to, and not because their hearts are crying to God.

6. How should we pray? _____

When Jesus was teaching the disciples about prayer in Luke 18, notice how he said they should do it. Luke 18:7:

...and will not God vindicate his chosen, who cry out to him day and night, while he listens patiently to them?

7. Does this sound like a weak little prayer prayed with only part of the heart?

In the same chapter Jesus told the story of the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer. It was the tax-gatherer whose prayer was answered. Notice how he prayed. Luke 18:13:

But the other kept his distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven, but beat upon his breast, saying, "O God, have mercy on me, sinner that I am."

8. Do you think this man was praying with his whole heart? _____

One more verse will help us to see how we should feel when we pray. Hebrews 4:16:

Let us therefore boldly approach the throne of our gracious God, where we may receive mercy and in his grace find timely help.

9. How does this verse say we should come to God? _____

God does not want us to be afraid or half-hearted when we pray.

10. How does he want us to pray? _____

ANSWERS

8. I think he was.
5. With all your heart.
2. Wife, children, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, neighbours, rulers, enemies.
10. Boldly, and with the whole heart.
7. No.
4. That God's will may be done.
1. Food, clothes, success in our work, wisdom, love and strength.
9. Boldly.
6. With all our heart.
3. Leaders of the church, and all other Christians.

WEEK 5 - HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

DAY 2

Yesterday we said that we must really feel the things we are saying when we pray. Prayers which are only words do not have any power with God. God hears when we pray with the whole heart.

But remember that praying is not telling God things.

1. What is prayer? _____

If we are talking with God and not only talking to him, then we must spend some time listening. One way to do this is by reading the Bible.

2. Whose words are in the Bible? _____

God speaks to us through his words in the Bible. When we read and think about his words we are listening to him. While we read we can be asking him to help us understand. God says that if we really want to understand and obey him he will show us his way.

John 7:17:

Whoever has the will to do the will of God shall know whether my teaching comes from him or is merely my own.

3. Will God show us his way if we do not want to do what he says? _____

When we have finished reading the Bible we can go on praying about the things we have read. We can ask God what he wants us to do about these things.

4. When we pray we should not only talk to God, but we should also

Now here is a surprising thing. If we wait for God to speak while we pray, he will not only tell us what to do, but he will tell us what to pray for. He will lead us even while we are praying. If we remember this it will help us very much. Sometimes we feel troubled in our praying. We are not sure what we should pray for or how to pray. Through the Holy Spirit, God helps us to pray. Romans 8:26:

In the same way the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not even know how we ought to pray, but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us.

5. Look carefully at this verse. Who is praying for us while we pray?

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All these things God will do for us if we pray with open hearts, waiting for him to speak to us.

6. Do you see now that praying is much more than asking God for things?

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When we pray in this way, then things will come clearly into our minds that we should pray for. We will not just be concerned with having things to make us happy. We will not just pray a wide prayer for all the sick people to get better, but we will begin to pray for special and definite things which God shows us.

7. When you pray for all the sick people do you expect God to heal them all?

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You see, sometimes our prayers are so big and wide that they are only words and we do not expect to see them answered before our eyes. But if we will ask God what to pray for and then pray for these definite things, then we can look for answers.

8. Do you think the Holy Spirit will tell us to pray for all the sick people at once?

Let us wait for God to speak while we are praying. Let us look for him to lead us even in what we pray for. Sometimes he will also tell us what to do in order for our prayers to be answered. Let us say you are praying for someone who is not a Christian that he may repent. As you pray and listen, God may tell you to go and visit him and show him your love.

9. If you are praying for someone who hates you because you have spoken angry words together, what may the Lord tell you to do?

Praying is not just speaking words to God. There is another side to prayer which is just as important.

10. What must I do while I am praying besides saying things to God? _____

ANSWERS

8. I do not think so. I think he will tell us one or two to pray for strongly and by name.
5. The Holy Spirit
2. God's words
9. To go and visit him and tell him you are sorry for the words you spoke.
6. I believe you do.
3. No
10. I must listen.
7. I do not think people do expect God to heal all the sick people when they pray for them all at once. They do not expect to see the hospitals empty tomorrow.
4. listen to God.
1. Prayer is talking with God.

WEEK 5 - HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

DAY 3

So far we have been talking about how to pray as it touches our inner feelings. We have learned what to think about as we pray.

1. Write a few lines about what you have learned so far this week about how to pray.

These are things which are inside ourselves. But what about things which are outside? Today we want to talk about these things. Where should we go to pray? Should we stand or kneel? What words should we use? Although these things are not as important as the feelings of the heart, the Bible gives us some teaching about them.

When Jesus was teaching his disciples on the mountain one day, he said many things about prayer. We have already heard how Jesus said that we should go away alone and pray to him in secret. Matthew 6:6:

But when you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place; and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you.

2. Where does this verse say we should go for prayer? _____

But perhaps you do not have a room where you can go and shut the door. You cannot keep other people out. Does this mean you cannot pray properly? No. Remember that a room is not the only place to get away from people and pray alone to God. People who live outside the cities may find a place in the forest or behind an ant hill. Jesus showed us how to do this.

Mark 1:35:

Very early the next morning he got up and went out. He went away to a lonely spot and remained there in prayer.

Matthew 14:23:

He sent the people away; after doing that, he went up the hill-side to pray alone. It grew late, and he was there by himself.

3. From these verses, to what two places did Jesus go for prayer?

But if you live in the city, perhaps the only way you can be alone with God is to get up early in the morning before other people are awake. Perhaps you might pray alone at night after others have gone to bed. The important thing is that you have a place where you can be alone with God each day.

4. Write the place where you can go to be alone with God. _____

Shutting the door as Jesus told us to do means more than having a door of wood to close. It also means putting away all the things of the world that would come into our minds to keep us from praying. This is why we usually close our eyes when we pray.

5. When you are praying, do you ever have trouble thinking about many other things when you should be praying?

Jesus said something else on that day to the disciples.

Matthew 6:7:

In your prayers do not go babbling on like the heathen, who imagine that the more they say the more likely they are to be heard.

6. Have you ever heard people pray using just the same words again and again, or saying "Father" or "God" after every few words? _____

Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 5:1-2:

Go carefully when you visit the house of God. Better draw near in obedience than offer the sacrifice of fools, who sin without thought. Do not rush into speech, let there be no hasty utterance in God's presence. God is in heaven, you are on earth; so let your words be few.

And yet, Jesus who is our example, sometimes prayed all night to God. So which is right, short prayers or long prayers? The difference is the way we pray. Solomon said that our words should not be too quick before God. I am sure Jesus' words were well thought through on that night and that he was listening as well as speaking. Even so, it took him the whole night to get finished. Perhaps the place made a difference too. Solomon said that few words are needed in church. Jesus was praying alone on the mountain.

7. Are long prayers which use the same words again and again pleasing to God?

We still have one thing to talk about. That is how we put our bodies when we pray. Let us look at people in the Bible who prayed and see what they did.

1 Kings 8:22:

Then Solomon, standing in front of the altar of the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven.

Matthew 26:39:

He went on a little, fell on his face in prayer, and said, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Yet not as I will, but as thou wilt.'

Mark 11:25:

And when you stand praying, if you have a grievance against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you the wrongs you have done.

Acts 26:36: 20:36

As he finished speaking, he knelt with them all and prayed. (This was Paul with his friends at Ephesus.)

Luke 23:42:

And he said, 'Jesus remember me when you come to your throne.' (This prayer was prayed by the thief on the cross beside Jesus.)

Matthew 14:30:

But when he saw the strength of the gale he was seized with fear; and beginning to sink, he cried, 'Save me, Lord.' (This was Peter's prayer when he was sinking on the water.)

8. Is there more than one way we can put our bodies when we pray? ____

These people in the Bible prayed standing, kneeling, bowing on their faces, lifting up their arms, sinking in the water and hanging on a cross. There is no law about what we must do.

9. Does God answer our prayers because of the way we put our bodies? ____

But these people wanted to show respect to God. When it was possible, they knelt or stood before God to show respect. We too should show respect to God in the way that we feel is good.

10. Which way of praying do you think shows your respect to God? _____

ANSWERS

6. I think you have heard it as I have.
9. No
3. to a lonely spot, up the hill-side.
5. Many Christians do have trouble with this.
8. Yes
2. Into a room by yourself
10. Answer as you feel
4. You will have to answer this one yourself.
7. No
1. We will talk about this in class.

WEEK 5 - HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

DAY 4

We have talked about two sides of praying. (1) How we feel inside. (2) What we do on the outside when we pray.

1. Thinking about our inner feelings, how should we pray? _____

2. Think of the outside. Where should we go for prayer? _____

Must we always kneel for prayer? _____

There is still another thing which the Bible teaches strongly about how we should pray. Later on we shall see that failure here is one of the reasons why we sometimes do not see answers to our prayers.

Notice Luke 18:1:

He spoke to them in a parable to show that they should keep on praying and never lose heart.

3. By this verse, how should we pray? _____

This is the place where we often fail. We start out well. We go to a place alone with God. We pray with our whole heart. We come without being afraid. We read God's Word. We try to listen to him while we pray. We try to do the things he wants us to do. We ask the Holy Spirit to show us what to pray for. We try to say the things we feel in our hearts and not just repeat words again and again. But sometimes we do not see answers to our prayers immediately. We get tired of praying and then we stop.

4. Will we get answers to our prayers by praying this way? _____

No, Jesus said we ought to keep on praying and not lose heart. But this is hard to do, especially when we do not get answers to our prayers and God does not seem to be hearing us. But remember that God does not say he will always answer our prayers immediately. In fact he says that sometimes we will have to wait. Psalm 27:14:

Wait for the Lord; be strong, take courage, and wait for the Lord.

5. If answers to our prayers do not come immediately, what should we do?

And what should we do while we are waiting? After Jesus said that we should keep on praying and not lose heart, he told a story to show what he meant. Open your Bible to Luke chapter 18 and read this story. Begin reading at verse 1 and stop at verse 8; then answer this question.

6. What did the widow do while she was waiting for the judge to help her?

This is what God wants us to do. Even though he is not like the bad judge, he wants us to keep asking him for the things we need. Jesus also told another story to show this. Open your Bible to Luke 11 and read verses 5 to 9.

7. What was Jesus teaching in this story? _____

8. Besides praying with our whole heart and not being afraid, how should we pray?

ANSWERS

7. That we should keep on asking him.
5. We should wait.
3. We should keep on.
1. With the whole heart.
8. By keeping on and not stopping.
6. She kept on asking for the thing she needed.
4. No.
2. To a place where we can be alone. No.

WEEK 5 - HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

DAY 5

Yesterday we learned what we should do if we do not get answers to our prayers immediately.

1. What should we do? _____

There is one more big thing that we should know about how to pray. This one is also told to us plainly in the Bible.

On the last night before Jesus was crucified, he said many things to his disciples. He told them that he was leaving them, but that he would send a Comforter to help them. Then he told them that whatever they needed they should ask for and they would receive it. He did not say this only once but many times.

John 14:13-14:

Indeed anything you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.

John 16:23-24:

When that day comes you will ask nothing of me. In very truth I tell you, if you ask the Father for anything in my name, he will give it you. So far you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be complete.

2. What did Jesus tell the disciples they should do when they had needs?

But they were not just to ask in any way.

3. In whose name should they ask? _____

Through Jesus is the only way we can come to God. In the Old Testament the people brought offerings in order to pray to God. They had to give these offerings for their sins because their sins separated them from God. Sin still keeps people from talking with God. But if we have received Jesus he takes away our sins. Through him we can come to God.

4. How did Jesus say we should pray? _____

There is another reason also why we should pray in the name of Jesus. Praying in Jesus' name does not mean that we say whatever we want to and then just say, "in Jesus' name" at the end. If we are really praying in the name of Jesus, then we will be careful to say the things he is happy for us to say. We will ask for only the things we know he wants us to have. We will ask according to his will.

5. Should we ask for things in Jesus' name just to make ourselves happy?

6. In what two ways does praying in Jesus' name help us? _____

We have learned five things about how we should pray.

- (1) Pray with the whole heart.
- (2) Pray listening to God and doing what he says.
- (3) Pray shutting out all other thoughts.
- (4) Pray keeping on and on.
- (5) Pray in the name of Jesus.

7. Cover these things and try to say them.

ANSWERS

4. In his name.
3. In the name of Jesus
6. It helps us have an open way to God and it helps us be careful to ask for the things he wants.
2. They should ask for whatever they needed.
7. Be prepared to say them in class.
1. Keep on praying
5. No