

Colossians 1:1-14

Week 2 - All About Prayer (Prayer, part II)

Learning Objectives

- To discuss the importance of prayer and what prayer looks like personally and in a group setting, using biblical examples and modeling.
- To spend time together in prayer to put into practice the message of the study.

Leader's Note: Plan to spend ten minutes in prayer together as a LARGE group at the end of this study. Trim questions accordingly—spending time together in prayer is very important, and will wrap up this study very appropriately!

? Did you grow up praying? What did prayer look like for you when you were a child? How is that different than now?

Previously on Prayer

In our last study, we looked at Paul's prayer for the new church at Colossae and how Paul continues to encourage the people of the church even during his own imprisonment. This week, we dive deeper into the concept of prayer, while keeping in mind Paul's prayer for and encouragement of the Colossians.

What is prayer? Prayer is talking to God. There is no wrong way to talk to God! The Bible gives us some examples of prayer and gives food for thought about why and how we pray.

Colossians 1:3-14 (NIV)

³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— ⁵ the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel ⁶ that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. ⁷ You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸ and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For

he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

? What types of things does Paul pray about for the believers in Colossae? (v. 9-12)

Possible Answers: Paul prays that the believers will be filled with the knowledge of God's will, will have wisdom and understanding from the Spirit, will please God by living worthy lives, will bear fruit in good work, will grow in knowledge of God, will be strengthened with great endurance and patience, and will give joyful thanks to God. These can be broken into the types: growth in God, holy lifestyle, outward display of inward spiritual maturity, and worship. All believers could benefit from growing in these areas. Leaders: there could be other types and categories study members pull out of the passage!

? In this passage, Paul establishes the importance of prayer through his own example of praying for the believers. Why is prayer essential in the life of a believer?

Possible Answers: Prayer is essential because it brings people closer to God, it fixes their minds and hearts on what God wants, and it deepens love and care in the community of believers as they pray for one another.

? What have you prayed about recently, either for yourself or for others?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary. Health, job, relationships, discipline, obedience to God, overcoming sin—all these and more may come up! Encourage people to share what they are comfortable with, and to consider how their prayers have affected them and others.

In Matthew, Jesus' disciples asked him how they should pray. Read Jesus' response in Matthew 6:9-13.

Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)

⁹ This, then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'

? What aspects of prayer does Jesus outline in this passage?

Possible Answers: Praise/thanks (vs. 9), submission to God (vs. 10), asking for provision (vs. 11), asking for forgiveness (vs. 12), requests (vs. 13).

? How does Paul's prayer in Colossians 1 mirror Jesus' prayer in Matthew 6?

Possible Answers: Paul's prayer contains many of the same elements, mentioning praise/thanks (vs. 3, 11-13), submission to God (vs. 10-11), asking for provision (vs. 9-12), asking for forgiveness (vs. 14), and other requests. It's not an exact copy by any means, but more an unpacked version tailored specifically to the Colossians' needs, physically and spiritually, as seen and understood by Paul.

? What do you usually say when you pray? Is there a pattern in how you pray? What posture do you take in prayer, if any (kneeling, closing your eyes, folding your hands, etc.)?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary. This question is to help people process what they do, and how it helps or does not help them, so they can find the best attitude of prayer. Hearing about others' methods can encourage people to try out new things and teach one another.

? Paul is basically "praying out loud" for the believers at Colossae—demonstrating the value of corporate prayer. Why do you think he felt it was important to tell them his specific prayer requests?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary. When someone prays out loud for you it is powerful, because you can feel their specific care and hear their mind clearly, and it also allows you to see how God works through their prayer.

? Optional question: How do you feel about someone praying out loud for you? How comfortable are you praying out loud for others?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary. Let people talk about their feelings and understand one another, recognizing that not everyone will be comfortable with this.

? How does prayer open your heart and mind to God?

Possible Answers: Personal; answers will vary. Encourage this discussion, but be sure to leave enough time to pray together for ten minutes at the end.

Leader's note: For the above question, feel free to reference outside passages about prayer to get the discussion rolling. Be wary of losing too much time to this, however, and suggest that Bible study attendees read them privately for discussion later, if things start to go down a rabbit trail. Make sure to preserve time to pray at the end of the study today! Some passages include:

- **Acts 7:59-60** Stephen prayed that God would forgive his enemies, even while they were killing him. Through his prayer, God showed Stephen how to extend grace.
- **Jonah 3:3-10** Prayer can lead to repentance, which in this case caused God to have mercy on the Ninevites—a great example of how circumstances can change through prayer!
- **Isaiah 38:1-8** King Hezekiah prays that he will not die yet, and God answers his prayer. God shows that he hears us, and answers our cries for mercy.
- **Daniel 6:10-28** Daniel prayed for help in the midst of persecution, and God rewarded his faithfulness by saving him from death in the lion's den—and this led to the salvation of King Darius! Prayer can be a simple example of faith to the people in our lives.
- **John 17** Jesus praying for himself, for his disciples, and for future believers—another excellent example of how we can pray and how, 2,000 years later, we can be encouraged by this prayer. This perfectly displays the power and encouragement of corporate prayer.
- **Luke 18:1-8** The parable of the persistent widow—Jesus teaches why we should pray and never give up, showing the power of persistence in prayer.
- **Romans 8:26-27** The Holy Spirit prays for us when we don't know what to pray.

Spend the last ten minutes of your study time praying together.

Leader's note: Spend the last ten minutes of your study together in prayer. Pray spontaneously for whatever is on your heart, out loud, and don't take prayer requests beforehand. Still do accountability time after this! This prayer time is a way to let group members be open and vulnerable with each other and draw close to God as a group. Revel in your time in fellowship with God. Leaders—be sensitive to what format is best for your group, whether praying one by one or popcorn prayer. Designate a closer to finish the prayer time.

For Discussion and Accountability

God desires that we pray boldly, asking for what's in our hearts—and He promises to hear us! (1 John 5:14-15) With that in mind:

? How do we pray more authentically and more boldly?

? What is on your heart to pray for this week?