

PRIVATE PRAYER

STUDY CENTER

Session 16

Proverbs 13:2 – The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God

God loves fellowship, communication and dialogue with His children. It was His idea to create someone, in His very same image, that He would be able to speak with. It was God who initiated prayer; it was His idea! He initiated it in His desire for fellowship and has longed for it ever since the fall of man. In this lesson we are going to learn how to develop a personal prayer life that brings the relationship that the Lord longs for. This is what prayer is: it is God's activity in our lives through spending time with Him. Prayer is getting to know God and it is also dialogue, fellowship, and worship. It is not just asking Him for things. Prayer is simple communication and also self-examination.

It is our responsibility to pray, intercede, fellowship and commune with God through prayer. Too often Christians don't take their prayer time, or potential of a life of blessing, seriously and have a life of prayerlessness. You see, prayerlessness is one of the greatest sins today among Christians. It is sad when many other religions are more dedicated to pray to false gods, or images, than Christians who know the One True God, Jesus Christ! It is important to develop a private prayer life with your Lord and creator. The reason many don't is simply because they don't make the time or prioritize it. But for some, it is because of sin.

We can see how sin and prayerlessness are connected. It is a sin not to pray to God and a lack of prayer will certainly make us more susceptible to temptations. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden they left God alone by hiding from Him because of their sin. Of course, God knew where to find them and even though separated through sin, the Lord was already planning the way to call them back to Him! He devised a plan so He would not be alone again. He sent Jesus to let us know we could be reconnected with Him. Jesus is the answer to our relationship to Almighty God. He knows how to reconnect and connect us to our wonderful Heavenly Father!

That is why Jesus taught on prayer and His prayer life didn't go unnoticed. We know this because one of His disciples asked Him to teach him to pray. Notice he wasn't asking Jesus how to do other things, but was asking how to pray! This isn't suggesting that other things weren't important but this disciple recognized that knowing how to pray was a secret to power. This disciple knew that Jesus' success and miraculous life was a result of His private prayer to God. He wanted to know the secrets of connecting with God, like Jesus experienced. This is because prayer, after all, is not just speaking words into empty space. It is connecting with a very real and powerful God who is waiting for us to respond to His love. That is the crux of what prayer is all about. It is our wanting to be with God. This disciple

most certainly saw this in Jesus' life. He saw the many hours He talked with the Father. It was more than prayer, it was relationship with God.

The disciple asked Jesus how to pray and Jesus responded in showing him how to establish a prayer life! **Luke 11:1- And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.**

For the next 12 verses, He taught a detailed session on prayer. He kept it simple, breaking it down into 3 general categories, which give us the basic make-up needed for a successful prayer life.

Personal prayer for you (verses 2-4).

Prayer for others (verses 5-6).

Persistence in prayer (verses 8-9).

He continued to show us more about prayer in Luke Chapter 11 as He shows us the things we can apply in our pursuit of Him. Jesus taught us keys, in His answer to this disciple's question about prayer, that are beneficial to us today. He taught in four main categories that will help us develop a stronger prayer life that gets results!

Category #1 - Your Personal Relationship with the Father

Luke 11:2 – "Our Father"

Your ability to pray begins with "Your Father!" He is not just someone else's Father, but YOUR Father. That means you talk with Him, spend time with Him and meet with Him. You have to plan for it and make a place for it. It is difficult to truly know your Father if you never set a time and determine a meeting place.

3 Keys to a Successful Prayer Life

Luke Chapter 11

- **Personal prayer for you (verses 2-4).**
- **Prayer for others (verses 5-6).**
- **Persistence in prayer (verses 8-9).**

Category #2- Praying for others.

Luke 11:5-6, "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?" Jesus teaches another principal about private prayer. It is found in not just praying for your needs but also in praying for the needs of others. He illustrates this by sharing a story of a friend who was going to make certain that his guest was taken care of. His persistence even in the middle of the night brought blessing both for himself and someone else.

Category #3 - Persistence in Prayer.

Luke 11:8-9, "because of his importunity" "Ask, seek and knock."

He shows us a third category, which is called importunity or persistence. It is found in a continual asking which does not quit until something is received. Seek and keep seeking even when it seems you aren't getting an answer. Knock and keep on knocking even though it seems the doors to Heaven aren't opening. It's your importunity, your willingness to not give up, and continue to pray that causes the blessing to be released.

• **Overcoming the Enemy.**

Luke 11:20-28 Much of these verses talk about binding the strong man or enemy. It is found in your willingness to resist the enemy and fight for your time with God. When you take authority over the devil and don't give in to his temptations you will stay close and

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connected with God and overcome the enemy.

When the disciple asked Jesus to teach him to pray, the Lord immediately taught the principles of relationship with God and answered by teaching what we commonly call "The Lord's Prayer". This is found in verses 2-4 in Luke Chapter 11.

2And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3Give us day by day our daily bread. 4And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

1. **Your Father.** The first thing He taught was to pray and get to know God by calling him "Your Father." It personalizes your relationship and helps develop intimacy in your private time of prayer with Him.

2. **Hollowed it be thy name.** We increase the intimacy of relationship through worship. It is how we express our love when we reach out to Him. This reveals how important worship is in our daily prayer life

3. **Give us our daily bread.** This is an expression of total dependence on Him for all your needs. It means we "feed" first on Him for our supply. Our hunger is satisfied in the Lord. The children's bread is healing, blessing and deliverance. When you spend personal time with God and thank Him for His provision it brings His blessing to you as you pray and after you pray. It is important when praying to remind God and thank Him for what He has, will, and does provide for His children.

4. **Forgive us of our sins and as we forgive others.** We can't allow sin to keep us separated from Him. Even when we fail, we need to run to Him! Adam and Eve hid from God when they sinned. Don't be ashamed, you can ask the Lord to forgive you and have confidence about it because you already cultivate forgiveness in your heart for other people. This spirit of forgiveness will also help us to escape temptation and be confident to pray "deliver us from evil." Self examination, repentance and checking of one's heart helps in your private prayer life to get prayers answered and bring change in your lives.

His Kingdom will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

A person who seeks God will make His purposes their priority. They are concerned that His will is established in their lives over their own plans and desires in life. When spending time with God it is imperative to continue to submit your will, heart, and desires to God.

When it came to Jesus' prayer life and what He taught His disciples that day, the most important thing was that He was intimate with His father. He called His Father daddy when He prayed and taught the disciples that was how to address God as a Father!

Mark 14:36 - And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

This shows the real heart and purpose behind a personal life of prayer. It reveals how God wants us to be with Him and how we need to be intimate with Him in prayer. In Jesus' greatest challenge of His life He called out to His Heavenly Father, or Dad! This is important because God doesn't want prayer to seem boring, routine, or with no heart to heart connection. He longs for friendship and spending time with His kids. He wants you to recognize and call Him Father!

We can learn a lot about personal prayer by looking at Jesus as our example of how He prayed. Jesus was in constant communication with His Heavenly Father. He was committed to a life of prayer. The Lord was committed to His private prayer life, making it His priority and lifestyle.

- **He prayed in the morning.** - Mark 1:35 - *In the morning a great while before the day found a solitary place,*
- **He prayed in the afternoon.** - Matthew 14:23 - *he went up into a mountain to pray and when the evening was come, he was there alone,*
- **He prayed in the evening.** - Luke 6:12 - *...and continued all night in prayer to God.*

We can learn from these verses that Jesus' personal prayer was at different times. It is important to find a time that works best for you and not just restricted to your drive into work or at meals. While these times may work, they don't develop a true in depth, intimate prayer time. The Bible does speak more about praying in the morning than it does other times. Again, this isn't a law but rather helpful because it makes God your first priority of the day and not an after thought. When prayer is not the first priority it will often become crowded out or forgotten by the busyness of your life.

I have often heard people put laws or standards on people's prayer life concerning when and how long to pray. While we are all for consistent and intimate prayer becoming a priority, it is important to set times that put God first and can be consistent. This is why, for example, early morning prayer works for those who make it the start of their day. You should strive for increasing your time of prayer also. Praying for one hour helps to connect with God, share your heart and pray for others. You can see from Jesus' prayer life that He prayed in various times, lengths and locations.

How long did Jesus pray?

Prayer was His Lifestyle - *Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. He lifted up His eyes, which speaks of continual prayer (John 11:41).*

- **1 hour - Mark 14:37- ...couldst not thou watch one hour?**

- **All night - Luke 6:12 - ...and continued all night in prayer to God**

We can see from these examples of how long Jesus prayed to show us how dedicated He was to His Father and how dedicated we need to be. Sure, we understand with schedules, kids, work and many daily responsibilities that it is hard, challenging, and difficult to pray. The most important thing to do is be consistent to establish daily prayer and communion with God that goes beyond the dinner blessing or the ride into work in the car. A good standard and goal to try to reach and set is what Jesus asked of His disciples after they were with Him three years. He expected them to be able to pray for one hour! This means those that are saved and maturing in God, especially for three years or more, should try to set time to pray everyday with God for at least one hour!

You might be saying that it is too hard to pray. Well, even the very locations of where Jesus prayed reveal that not all were the most ideal places that gave that heavenly environment. For example, Jesus prayed in a mountain, valley and a dessert. Jesus

prayed regardless of the situation surrounding Him. He prayed in the same types of situations we sometimes face. He conquered these areas in prayer, giving us the hope to be victorious over them also. If Jesus could pray in the valley, you can pray in the valley and find victory! Jesus also prayed in the wilderness where it was hot and dry. This means you can pray and connect with God in the dry desert. He also prayed on the mountain, which reminds us that even when everything is wonderful, we have to stay committed to prayer. Jesus' example of prayer reveals that we can stay close to God in prayer no matter what situations we face or what kind of schedule we keep. Determination to pray whether life is good, going badly or even downright ugly sometimes, is a milestone of victory to cross. Many people only pray successfully when everything is going good but don't pray because the scenery changes or circumstances don't conform to a comfortable environment. Committed prayer, regard-less of your circumstance will promote you in the kingdom!

Jesus established His personal prayer time and intimacy with God by being alone with Him. The same is true for us. He taught us this by telling us to find a place to pray that is private with God and shut the door. **Mark 6:6 - But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**

This is why Jesus walked in power, His private prayer was a source of spiritual strength and power for Him and will be the same for you. The way Jesus established this was by His continued, daily devotion and pursuit of God. He was so dedicated to prayer that He fit His life around prayer, not prayer around His life. Another thing that we can learn from Jesus' prayer life being a source of spiritual strength and power is that He had prayer partners. He was looking for His three spiritual pillars that He was developing to pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane in His most desperate time of need. We can conclude that He asked these three to pray with Him because He had done so before concerning other things.

It was Jesus' private prayer that produced public results in the form of signs, wonders, miracles and many changed lives. Throughout history those who are committed to a life of prayer have done miraculous things and with powerful results. Remember, prayer opened the red sea, brought manna from Heaven, caused the sun to stand still, brought fire from Heaven, and raised Lazarus from the dead to name a few! This was all due to prayer!

We are all at different places in our personal prayer life. The key thing is we have to make commitment to grow and increase in our pursuit of God. This is what Jesus did! **Mark 14:35 "Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed...."** He went a little farther, in other words He pressed ahead. He didn't stay stagnate or complacent where He was. This is exactly how we need to do it by setting a time in prayer and to keep increasing it. It is important to get a spiritual temperature gauge concerning your time with God. Ask yourself some questions regarding prayer and use it to self evaluate you and motivate you to deeper and more personal private prayer.

- **Are you leaving God alone?** Is your prayer time inconsistent or not at all?

- **Are you distracted in prayer?** It is so easy to become distracted and discouraged when you truly decide to start to pray. You find yourself looking at the clock and your mind wandering from focusing on prayer. We have all been there!

- **Do you fall asleep in prayer often?** This is usually a sign you are growing weak in prayer.

- **Do you only attempt to pray when things go wrong?** This is what is often called crisis praying. It is only praying when things aren't going good.

- **Does prayer feel boring?** Every hungry person determined not to leave God alone has felt that they were going through the motions at some point. You can't base your prayer life on how you feel.

- **Is your prayer time only at church or before a meal?** This is a definite sign of a weak prayer life.

- **Do you struggle to pray for any length of time?** The true characteristic of those who don't leave God alone is they can't get enough of His time. Developing a strong prayer life needs to start small and build up. You can't try tomorrow to pray for hours when today you only pray for minutes.

If you answered yes to many or all of these then today you need to start learning how to develop a personal prayer life. Again, this comes as you set a time and a place. Start today to be determined to stay committed, no matter how you feel. This will require disciplining yourself to make it a priority as you keep pushing yourself to persevere and be more fervent in prayer. Another key to a successful life of prayer is to learn to listen, watch and wait in prayer.

The more you pray the more you will learn how to pray and the more you will develop an awesome relationship with God.

You can learn to increase your prayer life by these simple suggestions. Go ahead and be determined to start a life of private, personal, and committed prayer. How do you learn to pray?

You learn by doing it. – Make a decision to start immediately. Do this by setting a time and place to pray and stay dedicated to being consistent with your prayer life. Pray the Word of God and speak the Word back to God. Have a notebook for things God may speak to you and a prayer list to talk with Him about.

Listen to others pray- This will help you learn how to grow stronger in your prayer life. Everyone prays different, the key is to develop your own way, as you learn from others.

Come to prayer – This will help you grow as a warrior and a person of prayer both publicly and private.

Find a prayer partner – Jesus had prayer partners, especially in the challenging times in the garden. It is best not to have a prayer partner of the opposite sex, unless they are your spouse. If you are married, the best prayer partner for you is your spouse. Make sure your prayer partner is not extreme, and that their life is in order and they are submitted under a true spiritual authority of a pastor.

Pray for others- You learn to pray by praying for others. This takes the focus off of you and puts it on God and others.

Pray in tongues – This will help build you up and make you strong and sensitive to God's Spirit and voice. Praying in tongues is a great way to grow deeper in the life of the Spirit.

These are just a few things that you can incorporate in your prayer life to help you become a person of dedicated prayer. Remember, prayer started as God's idea as He hungered for you! Now it is your responsibility to respond to Him as He waits to hear the sound of your voice before Him!

PRIVATE PRAYER

WORK CENTER

PRIVATE PRAYER

1. In your own words, what you have learned from this lesson? How would you define prayer?

2. What is one of the greatest sins of Christians? The _____ .

3. Jesus divided prayer into four categories. List the four categories:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1) _____ | 3) _____ |
| 2) _____ | 4) _____ |

4. When did Jesus pray? _____

5. Where are three areas that the Bible mentions Jesus prayed?

How do these places relate to us today in our prayer life?

6. Jesus said when we pray we are to _____ close _____ and pray to our father.

7. List out the six suggestions at the end of this lesson to start a committed life of prayer.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

ACTIVATION CENTER

The purpose of this activation is to help people to start, get back to, or develop a 30-minute or a 1-hour daily Private Prayer time. The 5 minutes on each of the suggestions below is for a 30 minute plan and the 10 minutes is for a 1 hour plan. These are suggestions and not to be considered as otherwise.

The key is do what works for you and stretches you. Start small and increase!

Set a time – The first thing to do is to establish a meeting time. Again, the best time is always the first in your day. The important thing is to keep your time realistic and consistent to what works for your schedule. Avoid extreme times and lengths when you first start to keep you from becoming discouraged or wanting to quit.

Set a place – After you set a meeting time that works and is realistic. You need to establish a meeting place that gives you that “private room” that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 6:6. You can change this depending on space and location.

Take Time to Worship and Search Your Heart – (5 min or 10 min) – Begin your prayer time by fellowshiping with the Father. Sing songs to Him, talk to Him and spend time getting to know Him. Worship Him, declaring His greatness. This is also a great time to search your heart and confess your sins, receiving His forgiveness.

Give a Moment of Thanks – (5 min or 10 min) - This is time where you thank God for who He is and what He has done. It is important to be specific and grateful when it comes to God's blessings and provisions.

Declare His Word – (5 min or 10 min) – Take a moment to declare His Word in your life and over your life and your loved ones. This can be scriptures you have memorized or praying God's Word from the Bible. Remember, God listens *for* and listens *to* His word when it is spoken.

Make Your Requests Known - (5 min or 10 min) – It is important to come into God's throne room prepared. He said to make your requests known to Him. ***Philippians 4:6 - Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*** A helpful tool to aid in answered prayer is to bring a notebook and writing instrument. Having a list of prayer requests written down and writing things that you may hear, sense or see in prayer is important in prayer development.

Pray For Others - (5 min or 10 min) – Make a list of names and prayer requests for others. Take a little time to pray over those who you are interceding for. Having a list to pray about for yourself and others is a great way to offer thanks to God for answered prayer and also builds your faith when you see God does answer prayer!

Pray In The Spirit - (5 min or 10 min) – Pray in the spirit. Pray with fervency spirit, soul and body. Let the Holy Spirit pray through you as you yield to the different diversities, and sounds of the tongues as you pray in the Spirit. Set a timer, if you have to, as you build intensity in the spirit.

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