

I pray this week finds you renewed in your strength as we have just celebrated our Risen King! As I mentioned during the video, I had a plan for this week, I had actually been looking forward to what we would be studying this week since we began, but throughout my study this week the Lord gripped my heart to pause. What a sweet and precious gift that He works in us and through us to draw our attention to what He is wanting!

Prayer...we have briefly discussed through the teaching just how important it is, now we are going to commit our time this week to re-focusing on our prayer life. Not negating that which we have already studied or habits we are working to form through our bible study but watching as God the Holy Spirit uses each "tool" we have developed over the past two weeks to enhance, broaden, and bless our prayer life.

Each day spend time in prayer before beginning your time of study, asking the Lord to illumine His word to your heart.

Day 1

After watching the video online, Read through Matthew 6:5-13 below, making observations, interpretation and applications.

Matthew 6:5-13

⁵“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

⁷“And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

⁹“Pray, then, in this way:

‘Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰‘Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹‘Give us this day our daily bread.

¹²‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’

Observe with me:

Christ lists 2 types of people we are not to “be like”, complete the chart below:

Who were they?	What were they doing?	Why were they doing that?

This is one of the most well-known passages of Scripture, often recited in ceremonies and services, sometimes even in pagan movies as if the words being chanted carry with them some extra supernatural power. However, this wasn't Christ's intention. Verse 9 records: “pray then, in this way”; not “pray this” or “recite these words. Jesus actually condemns meaningless repetition or chanting in prayer. He is giving us a guideline to follow, not a ritual to practice.

There is a commonly known acrostic that helps us remember how scripture instructs us to pray:

ACTS:

- A**doration
- C**onfession
- T**hanksgiving
- S**upplication

This does not mean that we have to follow some prayer ritual or model in order for God to hear our prayers, or that if we leave off a step our prayers are futile. This is a tool to use, not a mandate to follow. I remember in high school being challenged by a teacher to pray the attributes of God through the alphabet...A – All knowing, B – Beautifully merciful...(not sure that even counted), needless to say I wouldn't get very far into the alphabet before I was frustrated with both my lack of understanding the attributes of God as well as my real need to improve my vocabulary! These exercises are not meant to be a source of frustration, but of joy! We are going to dive deep into each of these aspects of prayer throughout this week strengthening our understanding and prayerfully renewing a greater passion for prayer in our lives!

Day 2: Adoration

Oxford online dictionary defines adoration as: deep love and respect; worship, veneration.

Let's look back to the beginning of the Lord's prayer:

“Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

What did Jesus instruct us to start our prayer with? _____

The Psalms are full of songs, prayers to the Lord, many of them great songs of praise and worship to our Lord! It can be a great, refreshing blessing for our soul to praise the Lord through His Psalms! Read through Psalm 98 below and highlight or underline each thing He has done! Then go back through and circle the things we, His people are called to do in response!

Psalm 98

O sing to the Lord a new song,

For He has done wonderful things,

His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.

²The Lord has made known His salvation;

He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

³He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

⁴Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth;

Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.

⁵Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,

With the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn

Shout joyfully before the King, the Lord.

⁷Let the sea roar and all it contains,

The world and those who dwell in it.

⁸Let the rivers clap their hands,

Let the mountains sing together for joy

⁹Before the Lord, for He is coming to judge the earth;

He will judge the world with righteousness

And the peoples with equity.

As we have just finished celebrating what our King has done for us on Calvary, let us take time to adore Him today, reflecting on what He chose to endure for our salvation.

Day 3: Confession

Oxford online dictionary defines confession as: a formal statement admitting that one is guilty of a crime.

Review from Matthew 6:12

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Keyword: debts - literally translated: offense, sin, transgression or guilt.

God forgives our debts - our offenses, sins, transgressions and guilt. But we need to confess those to Him, remembering that this isn't us telling God something He doesn't already know. He is all knowing and is never surprised by our sin. This is us openly agreeing with God that we fail, constantly “missing the mark” of His righteous standard. Remembering that His holiness is something we only have in Christ, by His grace.

We read in 1John 1:9,

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

We must confess our sins and God will forgive us, but that's not all...

What did Christ link with our receiving forgiveness of our sins? _____

Is this the only instance in scripture our forgiveness is tied directly to our forgiving others? Take a look at the following:

Mark 11:25

“²⁵Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.”

Ephesians 4:32

“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Read Matthew 18:23-35 and answer the following:

Why did the king choose to forgive the debt of the slave?

What was the slave's initial response? _____

How did the forgiven slave treat his fellow slave? _____

What was the king's response? _____

What does verse 35 mean? _____

God has forgiven so much of us, just like the servant in the parable, how could we hold any offense against anyone else. So, we must "forgive our brother from our heart" and confess our sins before God and He promises not only to forgive us, but also to cleanse us from all unrighteousness! That my precious sisters is an incredible blessing!

As we close out our study today, take time to confess your sin before our Lord, if you are harboring unforgiveness in your heart, confess that too, asking the Lord to help you forgive.

Day 4: Thanksgiving

Oxford online dictionary defines thanksgiving as an expression of gratitude, especially to God.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

These statements seem almost too easy...almost making us want to think "well, we aren't actually to take these statements literally". I did a word study on each of the first nine words...each one literally means exactly what it says. So, maybe the break down in interpretation doesn't lie in the actual words, maybe it's cultural.

In our culture of "me first" and living our "best life now" the idea of rejoicing always seems somewhat ludicrous...if we are constantly focused on "me". But we must stop here and note that this is a command. This is a command to rejoice always, pray without ceasing and to give thanks in everything. These are three absolute direct commands in scripture.

We live in an emotionally driven culture so much so that these emotionally led man-made philosophies tend to permeate even our churches, it often times becomes the lens through which we study God's word and make decisions. But as we will study next week this is not "real knowledge".

So, how? How can we rejoice when we receive bad news, when we are walking through possible financial stress, how can we rejoice when shepherding the hearts of our children seems more like a spiritual battlefield than an episode of Leave it to Beaver? How can we rejoice when our husband is failing to lead our home, or our marriage seems hopeless? How can we rejoice when our heart aches for companionship?

These three commands are interwoven in the life of the believer. We can rejoice always, because God is sovereign, so no matter what is going on He remains in control and He is faithful! We pray without ceasing because through our prayer we grow in our relationship with our Lord and our hearts are increasingly trained on Him and His will – these things link together to lead us to give thanks in everything!

1. Read Romans 8:28

Are you called according to His purpose? _____

Then know that He is working all these things for your good!

2. Read Romans 8:35-39

What can separate us from the love of God? _____

Can we rejoice in all things!?

3. Read Colossians 1:13-23

List 5 things we see Christ is or has done through this passage:

4. Read Philippians 4:6

How are we to make our requests before God? _____

Praise be to God! We have so much to be thankful for!!

5. As we reflect on what a mighty God we serve, read through Psalm 100 below and highlight or underline each thing He has done! Then go back through and circle the things we, His people are called to do in response!

Psalm 100

Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth.

²Serve the Lord with gladness;

Come before Him with joyful singing.

³Know that the Lord Himself is God;

It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;

We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

⁴Enter His gates with thanksgiving

And His courts with praise.

Give thanks to Him, bless His name.

⁵For the Lord is good;

His lovingkindness is everlasting

And His faithfulness to all generations.

Day 5: Supplication

Oxford online dictionary defines supplication as: the action of asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly.

John 14:13-14

¹³Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*.

This is a favorite among prosperity teachers – these false teachers who twist and contort God's Holy Word to fit their selfish narrative will typically teach this passage either down-playing or flat out leaving out the "in My name" phrase. Or they will teach or imply that any selfish desire we conjure up, tacking on the "in the name of Jesus" phrase more as a mystical cantation – that this passage obligates God in some way to fulfill that desire. As if the created could ever wield power over the Creator!

To truly understand this text, to truly grasp the heart of our bringing our supplications before God, we must understand that "in My name" is critical here!

Please do not buy into this "name it and claim" heresy that is perpetrating Christian culture in our day, the only thing that we have authority to claim is our desperate need for a Savior and His blessed Gospel...His provision, His protection, His love, His Sovereignty, His Omniscience, all for His Glory! It's all about HIM!

So, whatever we ask, in the name of Christ (in agreement with Him), He promises to do for the glory of God!

James gives us great insight into the depth our asking and God providing:

Read James 4:1-10 and answer the following:

1. Why do we not have? _____
2. Why do we not receive? _____
3. What does it mean to be a friend of the world? What does that look like in our culture?

4. Do you ever find yourself tempted to be a "friend of the world"? _____

5. What are some practical changes you can make small or large to prevent you from falling prey to the temptation to be a “friend of the world”?

6. What is our solution? (vs.7)

I don't want to pretend that this is always an easy thing. We all struggle on some level at different times in making friendship with the world, maybe it's...

- The way you speak disrespectfully to or about your husband who God has made head over you and commands you to respect, this is rampant in our culture.
- Cultural status...your neighbor has a nice house and fancy new car and that doesn't fall within your budget, but you allow envy to nestle into your heart.
- Modesty...you know God has called you to clothe yourself with modesty so as to not allow others to stumble, but it's not very fashionable, so you compromise.

This list could go on and on...the bottom line is whatever may tempt you to be a “friend of the world” leading you to sin, confess it now before the Lord so that you might draw near to Him, resisting the devil.

Resisting the devil...how do we do that? Is it as simple as saying “no”? Christ resisted the devil by quoting scripture (Matt 4). Likewise, we should also cling to God's word, meditate on it, memorize it. But I want to challenge you to go a step further. This week, let's get serious about our temptations. Seek out an accountability partner, if you are married, absolutely turn to your husband, if you are not, find a strong godly woman who can walk alongside of you and hold you accountable in love – that's what we are here for, to walk alongside of each other and hold one another up!

Now, let's close our week by turning back to the Psalms:

Psalm 25:4-15

Make me know Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me,

For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day.

Remember, O Lord, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses,

For they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my

transgressions;

According to Your lovingkindness remember me, For Your goodness' sake, O Lord.

Good and upright is the Lord; Therefore, He instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in justice, And He teaches the humble His way.

All the paths of the Lord are lovingkindness and truth

To those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.

For Your name's sake, O Lord, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.

Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way he should choose.

His soul will abide in prosperity, And his descendants will inherit the land.

The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, And He will make them know His covenant.

My eyes are continually toward the Lord, For He will pluck my feet out of the net.

I will be praying for you throughout the week!