



## CHAPTER 4

# Jesus Teaches About Prayer

Jesus prayed. He prayed for Himself, His disciples, and for future believers. He also taught about prayer. Prayer is our way of communicating with God whenever we want and wherever we are, whether out loud or in our hearts. Learning more about prayer, what to pray for, and key Bible passages that teach about prayer is a great foundation for our growing relationship with God.

## Passage Background

Jesus prayed at each significant event in His life and ministry. He prayed when He was baptized\* (Mark 1:21), when He selected His disciples (Luke 6:12-16), in the upper room after the Last Supper (John 17:1-26), in the garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion (Luke 22:41, 42), and even on the cross before He died (Luke 23: 34). He prayed alone and with others. This constant example of prayer prompted His disciples to ask further about how to pray. Jesus readily taught them how to pray and even gave them an example of a prayer to use that serves as our example as well.

## Luke 11:1-4

<sup>1</sup>“Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’<sup>2</sup> So He said to them, ‘When you pray, say:

*Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
<sup>3</sup>Give us day by day our daily bread.  
<sup>4</sup>And forgive us our sins,  
For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.  
And do not lead us into temptation,  
But deliver us from the evil one.’”*

*(New King James Version)*

### Digging Deeper

1. “Father” was a common way Jesus referred to His relationship with God the Father while He was on earth. He prompted His disciples to refer to God the Father that way as well.

How does it make you feel that God wants you to address him as “Father”?

2. This prayer begins with acknowledging who God is, acknowledging He has a kingdom, and acknowledging we desire His will to be done.

Why do you think it is important to begin our prayers with this in mind?

How difficult or easy is it for you to ask for God's will to be done in your life?

3. According to this prayer, what are some things we can ask God for?
4. Forgiveness of sins is a key part of this prayer. Why do you think it is important to ask God to forgive our sins? Why should we also forgive others when they sin against us?

## Just to be Clear

1. Does this passage mention a certain time of day you need to pray?
2. Does this passage mention a certain place you need to be when you pray?
3. Does this passage mention a certain position you need to be in to pray?

You do not have to pray every morning, every night, or follow some other rule for prayer you may give yourself. Faith in God is a relationship.

What would you think of a parent who said to her children, “You can talk to me at 7:00 a.m., at meal times, and then before you go to bed.” How rigid and mean that would be! That is not what a relationship is about.

You may find a time of day to specifically set aside to pray and read Scripture, but communication with God also can be an all-day conversation. There is no certain place you need to be to talk to God; He is everywhere, and the Holy Spirit is in your life (as we learned in the last lesson). You can pray in your kitchen, in church, at your job, or with a friend—your options are limitless! Further, a person does not need to be on her knees, head bowed, or eyes closed. Many Christians pray in their cars while driving, so there is no way to get into a certain position to pray!

## For Further Study

Read John 17:1-26 in your Bible.

This entire chapter is Jesus’ prayer the night before He is taken to the cross and crucified.

1. In verses 1-5, Jesus is praying for Himself.
  - In verse 4, how did Jesus bring glory to God?
  - In verse 5, what time period does Jesus refer to?

Jesus came to earth for a specific task: to die as the perfect sacrifice for all mankind—once and for all—to pay the penalty for sin.

In this verse Jesus asks the Father to restore Him, after His resurrection, to the rightful place of glory He always had before the world even began.

2. In verses 6-18 Jesus prays for His disciples.
  - Circle in your Bible words that show how Jesus asks God to protect us. Depending on the version of the Bible you use, the words may be slightly different. You may find words such as “keep them in Your care, keep/kept, guard/guarded, keep safe, protect/protected.”
  - Who does Jesus say He is protecting us from (verse 15)?

Unfortunately we have a foe. The evil one, Satan\*, hates God and hates Christians. He is against us and everything we try to do for God. He is out to destroy us, discourage us, and make us useless in God’s kingdom. So another item we can pray for is protection for ourselves and protection against any distractions or temptations the devil may throw our way.

3. In verses 20-26, Jesus prays for future believers.
  - In verse 20, who is Jesus praying for?
  - How does it make you feel that Jesus prayed for you while on earth?

## A Few Pitfalls

From time to time some people encounter pitfalls when it comes to this topic. Five are addressed here.

### **1. Using Eloquent Language or Strange Words in Prayer**

Prayer is simply talking to God. You do not need to use any words not used in your own daily life and language. There is no right or wrong way to pray; God already knows your heart, so do not sweat the wording.

### **2. Using Repetitive Words in Prayer**

Repeating the same words over and over (even God's name) does not make your prayers any more powerful than just simply talking to God, praising Him, and asking for your needs

### **3. Saying the Same Scripted Prayer Repeatedly Each Day**

Prayer is not a magic formula; it needs to be personal. Your heart has to be in your prayers. It is not so much the words as it is the attitude of your heart, so prayer does not need to be ritualistic. Personal, real and honest prayer is best.

### **4. Thinking God Does Not Want to be Bothered by Your Prayers**

Not true! You can pray to God about anything and everything, big or small. God loves you and is concerned about the details of your life. So pray about everything; God loves your communication with Him.

## 5. Not Realizing How Unforgiveness Is a Pitfall to Prayer

In His prayer, Jesus modeled asking God to forgive us and us to forgive others. When we do not forgive others who have wronged or hurt us, it is hypocritical for us to ask God to forgive us our sins against Him. So forgive others in your heart, just as you want God to forgive you.

Which one of these pitfalls have you fallen into in the past?

Do you think there are other prayer pitfalls people fall into?

### In Your Own Words

The new insights I learned about prayer are ...

The main message I gained from this lesson is ...

This new information will affect my life in this way ...

### Action Steps for Next Week

- **Prayer:** Consider praying to God a prayer of thankfulness that you can talk to Him anytime, anywhere. Share with Him your praise, hopes, fears, and needs.

- **Bible:** Continue reading the Gospel of John. Read chapters 9-12 this week. If you have questions about what you are reading, consider asking a trusted Christian friend, a woman discipling you, or a minister at your church.
  
- **Discipleship:** Many Christian organizations and churches offer discipleship. Consider asking someone in your church/small group if she will help you locate a person to disciple you—someone who has been a Christian for a longer period of time who will meet regularly with you to help you grow deeper in your relationship with God.
  
- **Others:** Pray for someone in your life who needs a special touch or help from God. You may wish to tell the person of your prayers and ask for specific prayer requests.
  
- **Forgiveness:** This lesson also briefly talked about forgiveness. Do you need to ask God's forgiveness for anything? Is there anyone you need to ask to forgive you? Is there anyone you need to forgive?
  
- **Memorize:** Recite Luke 11:1-4. Review past Scripture verses you have memorized.

## Prayer Journal

This space can be used write a prayer to God, to record items you are praying about and the date they are answered, or to keep track of others you want to pray for.

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## Personally Speaking

I remember praying as a young child. My mother taught me to pray the Lord's Prayer, and I recited it each night at bedtime. She also taught me to say a blessing for my food at mealtimes. I remember praying for God to help me each morning in elementary school when the principal of my school took a moment of silence in our morning announcements.

As I grew into a teenager, my life became consumed with trying to please my peers through wild living. During that phase of my life, I used prayer like a vacuum cleaner. When I created some type of mess in my life through poor choices, I desperately prayed for God to clean it up. When He did, I simply put the vacuum back up until I created another mess.

At the age of 16, after learning of God's love for me and my sinfulness, I knelt beside a pew in church and put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ. That prayer of salvation was sincere, from the heart, and life-changing.

I have always loved the words God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah to the Israelite people. In this verse God beckons them, and now us, to come to Him in prayer.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you” (Jeremiah 29:11).*

Communicating with God through prayer is such a gift. We, mere humans with finite brains, can approach God Almighty on His throne and bring Him our thoughts, praises, requests, hurts, excitements, and adoration—and He says He will listen! What a joy! How thankful I am God has thrown open the doors of heaven and beckoned us to come to Him in prayer.