

BIBLE STUDY | FALL 2025

LEARNING TO  
**pray**  
FROM THE BIBLE



**CHRIST**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

We have three recommended ways for engaging with *Learning to Pray from the Bible* – **dig in**, **go deeper**, and **deeper still**.

## DIG IN

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- If you are in a study group, join your group weekly to enjoy conversation, discuss the lesson, and talk through the Foundation Questions. If you are doing the study individually, work through the Foundation Questions at your own pace.
- Listen to or watch the teaching each week. The teaching is available on SoundCloud and YouTube. You can subscribe on those platforms or visit [christpres.org/group-resources](http://christpres.org/group-resources), where you can find all the Bible study resources. You'll also receive a weekly email with a link to the teaching.

## GO DEEPER

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- Read the weekly Scripture and go through the Observe and Reflect questions to deepen your dive into God's Word.
- Feel free to complete questions throughout the week or all in one sitting. If you are in a group, your group may discuss some of these questions each week.
- Read the Application Summary.

## DEEPER STILL

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- We recommend the following resources as companions to your study: *Taking Hold of God: Reformed and Puritan Perspectives on Prayer* by Joel R. Beeke and Brian G. Najapfour, and *How to Pray: Reflections and Essays* by C.S. Lewis.

# INTRODUCTION – “WHY WE PRAY”

Among the countless inquiries the disciples asked of Jesus, they petitioned him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). There’s something instinctual about prayer, yet mysterious. Many understand praying to be nothing more than talking to God—a conversation where we ask the Creator of the world for help; it’s our opportunity to ask the Lord for something.

But is that it? Is there more to it than that? Like the disciples, we might ask ourselves, “How do I do this? Am I doing this right? Is there a right way to pray? Is there a *wrong* way to pray? Can I really ask him for anything? Yes, Lord, teach me to pray!”

Fortunately, Jesus wasn’t silent on the subject of prayer, nor is the rest of his Word. In addition to the prayer that Jesus taught, the saints, prophets, and apostles offered up numerous prayers throughout the Scriptures. What do they have in common?

James, the brother of Jesus, offers prayer guidance for Christians. In James chapter 5, he gives us instruction on *when* we should pray: “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray” (v. 13a). This should come as no surprise, as he writes to a group of churches facing trouble, conflict, and persecution. Of *course*, they should pray. But then James continues, “Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise” (v. 13b). James groups those who suffer along with those who are cheerful and then proceeds to include those who are sick or have committed sins (v. 15); he identifies all these categories as occasions to pray.

The apostle Paul also offers similar instruction, telling us to pray “at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication” (Ephesians 6:18), and to pray “without ceasing,” as well as to “give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thessalonians 5:17–18).

Simply stated, the Bible is telling us to pray all the time . . . for anything and everything.

However, the underlying instruction we’ll find in the prayers of the Bible doesn’t give us license to ask God for anything that we want; it’s about learning to pray for what *he* wants—for what glorifies him. If the Lord is eternal, omnipotent, and unchanging, it means he ordains whatsoever comes to pass, and if that’s the case, how could our prayers change the mind of God? The Lord has one objective throughout redemptive history, with one inevitable conclusion: the glory of God. If that’s his ultimate objective, shouldn’t our prayers similarly follow?

In his book, *How to Pray*, C.S. Lewis states. “Prayer is not a machine. It is not magic. It is not advice offered to God. Our act, when we pray, must not, any more than all our other acts, be separated from the continuous act of God Himself, in which alone all finite causes operate.”

What this means is that prayer is not an effort to conform God’s will to ours; instead, prayer is God’s instrument to conform our will to his, who is at work in all finite causes, in all circumstances, at all times, with the end objective of glorifying himself. Therefore, we should pray to that end!

As we examine just a handful of the prayers we find in the Bible, this is the foundational truth we’ll discover: the Lord uses prayer to shape us into the holy, righteous image of Christ. And because we receive his righteousness, we can be assured, as James tells us, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (James 5:16b). Prayer works because we pray in Christ; we are being conformed to *him*, and through him and in our prayers, we will bring glory to him!

# WEEK ONE

## INTRODUCTION: THE ANATOMY OF A PRAYER

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### MATTHEW 6:9-13

<sup>9</sup> Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread, <sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

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Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4 give us the prayer that the Lord taught his disciples to pray. For those who struggle with what to pray, this, “The Lord’s Prayer,” provides a roadmap. While it’s not the longest prayer in the Bible, it’s certainly comprehensive in that it contains many of the elements we’d find in *any* of the Bible’s prayers. It’s as if the Lord personally distilled all of the prayers we find in Scripture to give us this concise, yet dense, heavenly dialogue.

So what are the elements we find in this prayer that we might also find in others? Or perhaps more importantly, what are the elements we see in this prayer that we ought to include in our own?

#### Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

The Lord’s prayer begins with **praise**. The Lord God is the sovereign one; by him and through him do all things subsist (Romans 11:36). The only reason we have life is because of his grace alone and as we go before him in prayer, it’s important to remember this. We must not forget who *he* is, and just as importantly, we must not forget who *we* are. He is holy and we are not. “Hallowed be your name” is often translated as “Let your name be kept holy.” To be holy is to be set apart, or literally, cut away. In terms of holiness, the Lord is far and away set apart from us; he exists in a totally separate category from mere mortals because of our sin nature. We have no right to even approach him, yet he’s given us access through Jesus Christ. As we pray, it’s good to begin with praise, not because he needs a reminder of his holy character, but we often do. Our posture of prayer begins with exalting him and humbling ourselves; doing so sets the structure and atmosphere of our conversation with him.

#### Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus continues his teaching on prayer by instructing the disciples on **submission**. Related to praise, submission is a continuation of the recognition of God’s holiness—his separateness. When we petition the Lord by asking him for anything in prayer, it would be foolish for us to believe we are informing the *omniscient* one of anything. He knows what we need before we even ask it (Matthew 6:8)! So before we make our first request, we must rightly order our wills by acknowledging that he knows best. Though we express our heart’s desire to him, our first request should be rooted in the idea that we wish to align our wills with his and not the other way around. To pray, “your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” carries at least two implications: first, that we are committing ourselves to learning all we can about his will, and second, that we pledge, by his grace, to *do his will*—to submit to his will—as much as we know it, even if it runs contrary to our requests!

#### Give us this day our daily bread . . .

With our priorities in place—an acknowledgment that God is holy and knows and does what is best—we then begin our **supplication** to the Lord; we ask him for help. The Scriptures teach us that God himself is the ultimate source of every good, whether food, clothing, work, leisure, strength, wisdom, friendship—all of which, at different times and levels, are needs. As with all matters of prayer, enumerating our requests to him doesn’t inform him of our needs; he knows all things! Instead, when we petition the Lord of our needs, it reminds us of our utter dependence upon him for all things, every moment of every day; he provides daily bread, *and he implores us to ask for it*. “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” (Matthew 6:30).

#### . . . and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

There’s a straightforward, logical progression to the Lord’s Prayer. To this point, God has already revealed himself as holy,

omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent. What should our response be? We should have a deeper comprehension of our shortcomings held up against his perfection. But the Lord's instruction in this prayer isn't that we languish in our deficiency; instead, bring them to him in our prayers of **confession**. When exposed to the holiness of God, Isaiah had no recourse but to decry his unholiness and sinfulness before God, but the Lord made a provision for him and cleansed him with a burning coal as he was told, "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for" (Isaiah 6:6-7). Once again, confession of sin isn't a means of revealing something to God he doesn't know; instead, it serves to give us yet one more avenue to understand our need and dependence upon him. Only a God full of grace can forgive us of our sin through the substitutionary atonement of Jesus.

This prayer of confession also carries with it instruction. When we have a renewed understanding of our sinfulness and the immense grace that God has extended to us in Christ, our natural response should be to extend to others the same grace that's been granted to us. When we understand God's grace, we can't help but respond in **thanksgiving**. Our greatest display of thanksgiving is our ability and willingness to extend grace to our brothers, sisters, and neighbors.

In this short, succinct prayer that the Lord taught his disciples, we see elements of *praise, submission, supplication, confession, and thanksgiving*. If you struggle with what to pray when you go before the Lord, begin with these. Perhaps more than anything, these elements will heighten your awareness of your utter need for your Lord and Savior. The more you realize your need, the more you desire his nearness. The more you desire his nearness, the more you seek him. The more you seek him, the more you will be conformed to his likeness, which is his ultimate objective for you—to make you like Jesus!

### **What about the ending?**

*Throughout the ages, most Christians have memorized the Lord's Prayer with the final doxology, "For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen." You may have noticed this ending is not in the text from Matthew or Luke! The early Church—as early as the late first century—added this ending in extra-biblical Christian writings; so it has long been a part of the recitation of the Lord's Prayer tradition. Though it was not part of the original gospel text, it is biblical in nature as it is a near parallel to David's doxology at the temple's commissioning in 1 Chronicles 29:11, "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all." Because of its strong similarities to biblical texts like these, the Church has generally adopted its inclusion as we recite the prayer corporately.*







## APPLICATION SUMMARY

Hannah's prayer is one of the most beautiful examples of sorrow and waiting in all of Scripture. The cries of barren women (Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, and others) appear throughout the Old Testament, a spectacular showing of God's care for those society would have cast out because of their infertility. God's tender mercy toward these women reveals to us so much about his character; their prayers remind us that our ultimate hope is in Christ alone for our identity, our value, and our security. Hannah needed a son to achieve those earthly rewards; we need only God's son for the same eternal blessings.

When Hannah prays, she pours her heart out to God. 1 Samuel 1:7 tells us her condition remained "year after year," and yet she still returned faithfully to the temple of the Lord to pray. Romans 12:12 says, "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer," which Hannah exemplifies without question. It is not the immediacy of God's answer to Hannah that teaches us the most; it is rather her steadfast faith that compels us to keep praying and keep trusting.

# WEEK THREE

## SOLOMON: A PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

### CONTEXT

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King David desired to build a temple for the Lord—a permanent dwelling place, as opposed to a temporary tabernacle—where the Lord could commune with his people (1 Chronicles 28:2-6). David would never see the completion of the temple; instead, David's son, Solomon, would complete its construction during his reign. Soon after the completion of the temple and the arrival of the ark of the covenant (1 Kings 8:1-13), Solomon addresses the whole assembly about the meaning of the event (1 Kings 8:14-21). Then, the king turns to address God and offers up a prayer of intercession on behalf of the people of the Lord.

### FOCAL PASSAGE

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#### 1 KINGS 8:22–53

<sup>22</sup> Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven, <sup>23</sup> and said, “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart; <sup>24</sup> you have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day. <sup>25</sup> Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.’ <sup>26</sup> Now therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David my father.

<sup>27</sup> “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! <sup>28</sup> Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, <sup>29</sup> that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. <sup>30</sup> And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

<sup>31</sup> “If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house, <sup>32</sup> then hear in heaven and act and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness.

<sup>33</sup> “When your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you, and if they turn again to you and acknowledge your name and pray and plead with you in this house, <sup>34</sup> then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them again to the land that you gave to their fathers.

<sup>35</sup> “When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict them, <sup>36</sup> then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk, and grant rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

<sup>37</sup> “If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemy besieges them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, <sup>38</sup> whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart and stretching out his hands toward this house, <sup>39</sup> then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind), <sup>40</sup> that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our fathers.

<sup>41</sup> “Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake <sup>42</sup> (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, <sup>43</sup> hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of





1. In verse 25, Solomon reminds the Lord, “keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him . . .” Does God need a reminder of his promise? In prayer, what purpose does it serve to remind God of who he is or what he has done?
2. An immense amount of work went into the temple’s construction requiring countless hours of planning, labor, and maintenance, yet in verse 27 Solomon asks, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!” What is the purpose of the temple, and what might it teach us about prayer?

*“God has condescended to allow a temple to be built for his Name, and by doing so he has identified himself with his people. Thus through the temple God has provided a place of contact between humanity and God, a way for sinful people to approach a holy God, to have their sins forgiven, and to live in fellowship with him.”—Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel*

3. Take a moment to look over the form of this prayer of intercession. Briefly outline some of the themes you observe. What do you find to be Solomon’s chief concerns as expressed in this prayer? Does Solomon pray for concerns of the past, present, or future?

## APPLICATION SUMMARY

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In Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-30, the Lord gives his people a description of the blessing they will receive if they walk in his ways. However, the lion's share of these passages describes the calamity that will befall the people for their refusal to obey God. There's an escalating intensity to the Lord's discipline that follows prolonged disobedience—including warnings of exile from the Promised Land—a devastating thought! However, the Lord always designs his disciplinary acts to bring his people to a place of repentance and restoration.

In this prayer of intercession, King Solomon pleads that the temple would always be a means for sinful humanity to approach a holy God. Solomon prophetically prays believing there will come a time when God's people will walk through everything the Lord warns in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-30, so he intercedes on their behalf, that they would be a repentant people, and that the Lord would hear their prayers; he bases his prayers on the words that God himself has spoken.

Solomon prays a seven-fold prayer; he first prays for justice—that the Lord would vindicate the righteous according to his own righteousness (vv. 31-32). He prays for rescue and return—that when God allows the enemy to defeat his people in judgment, they would be forgiven and restored (vv. 33-34). Solomon prays for provision following the Lord's discipline—that when his people repent, he would forgive them and rain his blessings down on them (vv. 35-36). He prays not only for the deliverance of his people (vv. 37-40), but also for the outsider (vv. 41-43), that the temple would be "a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isaiah 56:7). Solomon prays for victory, that even when his people are away from the temple in battle that the Lord would be in their midst (vv. 44-45). And lastly, Solomon prays for forgiveness, that when his people are away from the temple in captivity, the Lord would hear their prayers of repentance and meet them with compassion (vv. 46-50).

Astoundingly, the Lord answered all these prayers both immediately, and ultimately and perfectly *in Christ*. Jesus is our true Intercessor (Hebrews 7:25) who is also the ultimate Temple—the perfected means for sinful humanity to approach a holy God. The Lord hears our prayers!







## APPLICATION SUMMARY

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Hezekiah's prayer in 2 Kings 20 is short (one verse), and yet it is exceedingly powerful. It is a prayer of succinct petition born out of intense emotion and fear. Facing death, Hezekiah asks the Lord to remember him. Throughout the Old Testament, we see examples of the Lord showing favor to those who follow him. As one of Israel's good kings, Hezekiah knew the Lord *could* remember him. In 2 Kings 19, Hezekiah had prayed for deliverance from Sennacherib, the king of the violent neighboring Assyria. Verse 19 says, "O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone." God delivers the people of Judah by striking down 185,000 Assyrian troops, and Sennacherib returns home.

This is the immediate context before Hezekiah's next prayer, when he faces imminent death. He asks the Lord to remember him because of his good deeds, and the Lord does. Hezekiah is healed and lives for 15 more prosperous years. But this is not a formula we can emulate: be good and righteous, and the Lord will heal us. God's answer to Hezekiah shows us exactly why the Lord saved Hezekiah, and it isn't for Hezekiah's sake. He says, "I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD, and I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake" (vv. 5–6).

God's covenant with his people drives his response to Hezekiah. God's ultimate plan to preserve the line of David until the coming of Jesus drives his response to Hezekiah. But God's love for Hezekiah also drives his response. Here we see the sweeping sovereignty of God over all of time and history, and we see his intimate care for his beloved child, Hezekiah, when he says, "I have seen your tears. I will heal you". This tender, sovereign God who loves and heals Hezekiah has the same posture toward you. Dwelling with God in prayer gives us confidence like Hezekiah. Hezekiah was the Lord's, through and through. He knew it. And so when he faced death, he could simply cry out to the God he trusted so much. May we do the same.







## APPLICATION SUMMARY

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In his commentary on Psalm 51, Augustine wrote, “the fountain of God’s mercy is not closed.” David’s psalm of deep repentance, of penitence, finds its home in the mercy seat of God. We can learn from David’s repentance on multiple levels: first, the importance of true, deep repentance. Second, the confidence David has in the Lord’s steadfast love and forgiveness. This is a prayer of David—but a prayer *to* and *about* God. God is the subject; he is honored and feared. David acknowledges his sin against God, and he seeks God’s forgiveness, knowing that only God can cleanse him from the stain of sin. Tim Keller, in his book *Prayer*, calls prayers of repentance such as this one “prayers of intimacy.” It is through a deep intimacy with God that we can feel safe, secure, and loved even in the darkest times of our lives, when we realize the depth and breadth of our sin. And yet we can come to God, call him Father, and trust that we will be forgiven, our sin cast as far as the east from the west.

Augustine wrote of David’s words, “Hear him crying, and with him cry; hear him groaning, and with him groan; hear him weeping, and mingle tears; hear him amended, and with him rejoice. If from thee sin could not be excluded, be not hope of pardon excluded.” We, because of our indwelling sin, cry, groan, and weep with David; but we also share his hope of pardon because of the work of Christ on the cross.











## OBSERVE AND REFLECT

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1. Read through the prayer again and list out all of the ways Isaiah describes the Lord. What do you notice? What themes does Isaiah draw about the Lord?

2. Alec Motyer writes of chapter 64 in his commentary on Isaiah, *“The problem is perennial: are not we too baffled at the way he runs the world—when he could so easily do things so differently? . . . God indeed could deal with any problem with consummate ease, but why should such a God intervene for such as we?”* Do you resonate with this idea of praying to change God’s mind? What does Isaiah say to that idea?

*“Everything that God does, everything that God allows and ordains, is in the supreme sense for His glory. It is also true that while God seeks His own glory supremely, man benefits when God is glorified. We pray to glorify God, but we also pray in order to receive the benefits of prayer from His hand. Prayer is for our benefit, even in light of the fact that God knows the end from the beginning. It is our privilege to bring the whole of our finite existence into the glory of His infinite presence.”—R.C. Sproul*

3. Read 1 Corinthians 2:9–11. Paul quotes Isaiah 64:4. How does Paul describe God’s thoughts? How do you reconcile God’s sovereignty and omniscience with the act of prayer? Reflect on the Sproul quotation above.

## APPLICATION SUMMARY

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Isaiah's prayer in chapters 63 and 64 specifically invites the Lord to descend and act on behalf of his people. Isaiah asks questions like "where are your zeal and your might?" and "why do you make us wander?" He concludes the prayer asking, "Will you keep silent, and afflict us so terribly?" Motyer notes that God could, in fact, answer Isaiah, quell his anxiety, and solve the problem. Tish Harrison Warren writes, "Through prayer, I dared to believe that God was in the midst of my chaos and pain, whatever was to come. I was reaching for a reality that was larger and more enduring than what I felt in the moment."

Reconciling God's sovereignty and his command to prayer is part of every Christian's journey. We are to pray unceasingly. Praying the words of Isaiah can remind us of God's character, his ability to act, and our dependence on him for all things. The posture of asking God to act strengthens our muscle of dependence and trust.





## OBSERVE AND REFLECT

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1. Using the chart below, make notes of the Old Testament references Mary uses in her prayer.

| Mary's Words | Scripture Reference                     | Notes |
|--------------|---|-------|
| v. 46        | Psalms 34:2                             |       |
| v. 47        | Psalms 35:9                             |       |
| v. 48        | 1 Samuel 1:11                           |       |
| v. 49        | Psalms 89:8; Psalms 126:2; Psalms 111:9 |       |
| v. 50        | Psalms 103:17                           |       |
| v. 51        | Psalms 89:10; Daniel 4:37               |       |
| v. 52        | Psalms 147:6                            |       |
| v. 53        | Psalms 107:9                            |       |
| v. 54        | Psalms 98:3                             |       |
| v. 55        | Psalms 132:11                           |       |

2. Mary's prayer of adoration is born out of her confidence in God from her knowledge of Scripture. How can knowing Scripture better help you to pray? To what Scriptures do you turn to help you pray?

## APPLICATION SUMMARY

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Charles Spurgeon wrote of Mary's prayer, "Notice how Mary quotes Scripture. Her mind seems to have been saturated with the Word of God, as though she had learned the books of Scripture through and had them 'by heart' in more senses than one. And isn't it insightful that though the Holy Spirit was speaking by her, he quoted the older Scriptures in preference to uttering new sentences? What honor he put on the Old Testament by so continually quoting it in the New Testament, even as the Lord Jesus also did! Let us, too, prize every part of God's Word. Let us soak in it until we are saturated with scriptural expressions. We cannot find any better ones, for there are none."

Of the many beautiful gifts we have in Mary's prayer, perhaps this is the best: this young girl knows Scripture so well. Praying through Scripture, whether psalms or other prayers found throughout the Bible, is a simple and profound way of communing with God. Mary's faith and gratitude toward God, when her whole life was about to change, her reputation shattered, her family questioned, and her future thrown into doubt, is born out of a steadfast faith rooted in the stories of God's people. We can pray with Mary's posture not because of what we want God to do in the future, but because of who he is and has always been: the Creator of the universe, a loving Father, and the One who is mighty to save.





## OBSERVE AND REFLECT

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*“When we seek glory, we do so at the expense of the glory of God. But when Jesus asked the Father to glorify Him, it was not at the expense of the Father because the glorification of the Son is the glorification of the Father”—R.C. Sproul*

1. In verses 1-5, Jesus prays, “Glorify me.” Consider the quote from R.C. Sproul above. Generally speaking, we find it objectionable when someone seeks glory; why is it good that Jesus prays to receive glory? Is this a prayer that only Jesus can pray? How does this inform how we should pray?

2. In verses 6-19, Jesus prays specifically for his disciples—the ones who followed Jesus during his earthly ministry. What are some of the specific things Jesus prays for them? Why would Jesus pray that the Father “keep” (v. 12, 15) his disciples? Is it possible that the disciples could fall away?

*“In a very real sense, we, as believers, were in the mind of Jesus on that night He prayed this prayer of intercession. His words give us an idea of what He does in His ongoing ministry of intercession at the right hand of the Father, where He intercedes for us daily.”—R.C. Sproul*

3. A main point of emphasis in Jesus’ prayer for the Church (vv. 20-26) is unity. In your estimation, has this prayer been answered? Is the Church unified? Why or why not? Do we pray for unity in the Church as we ought to?

## APPLICATION SUMMARY

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The office of high priest was instituted at Mount Sinai when God gave the Law to the Israelites through Moses. Their chief responsibility was to intercede for Israel before God (Exodus 28-29). Once per year, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to offer the sacrifice that would cover the sins of the people (Hebrews 9:7). In other words, the priest would act as the intermediary between God and man, offering the sacrifice to satisfy God's justice against the sin of man. However, the sacrifice wasn't effectual to remove sin—it served as the pointer to the perfect sacrifice that *would be* effectual in covering our sin. Jesus came not only to offer the perfect sacrifice, but also to be the perfect sacrifice. Though his work on the cross is complete, he still serves as the perfect High Priest who continues his work of intercession, standing between God and man, covering the sins of man, and pleading their case based on his own work.

Jesus' High Priestly Prayer gives us insight into his ongoing intercessory work (Hebrews 7:25). If we follow the form of Jesus' prayer, we see that he prayed for the Father to be glorified through the completed work of Christ, and that Jesus would return to his state of glory that he enjoyed with the Father since before the foundation of the world. Jesus then prayed for his disciples—that they be kept from the evil one as they would face extraordinary challenges in the days ahead—and that his word would be preserved in them as they spread the gospel. Finally, Jesus prayed for the greater Church—for those who would receive the word from the disciples and become the Christian Church—that they would have perfect unity in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It should come as no surprise that the Father answered all of Jesus' prayers, not specifically because Jesus found the perfect combination of words that would compel the Father to respond to his petitions positively, but because Jesus enjoys perfect unity with the Father. Since Jesus and the Father (along with the Holy Spirit) exist in perfect unity, Jesus expresses prayers in perfect harmony with the will of the Father, to the end that glorifies God. As Christians who seek the Lord in prayer, we should take note of this. When we pray, we should always pray according to his will and to the end that glorifies God, and as he did with Jesus, he *will* answer our prayers, if not immediately, then ultimately, because his will is perfect and he *will* be glorified.





2. How do you end your prayers? Do you pray “in Jesus’s name”? What do you think it means to pray in the name of Jesus?

3. How has your understanding and practice of prayer changed through this study?

## APPLICATION SUMMARY

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Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is a remarkable work, both literarily and spiritually. Its precise and poetic language magnifies the theological heft of every word. The first chapter, containing an incredible prayer acknowledging the sufficiency of Christ, is no exception. This is Paul’s prayer for Christ’s church, and one from which we can draw so many lessons. In John 16:23, Jesus commands his followers to pray in his name. Reading this prayer from Ephesians, Paul does just that. This is a prayer of blessing over God’s people and a blessing to Christ. It is a prayer of praise, reminding us of all we receive from Christ.

Our permission, guarantee, assurance, and hope in every prayer is because of Christ Jesus. Because he called us in hope (v. 18), because we receive the riches of his glorious inheritance (v. 18), because his power is immeasurably great toward us (v. 19), because this is the same power that raised Christ from the dead (v. 20), because Christ is seated at the right hand of God (v. 20), because Christ is above all rule and authority and power and dominion (v. 21), because Christ is the head of the church (v. 22), when we pray in Christ’s name, and we know he intercedes with and for us (Romans 8:34), our prayers are effective. Effectiveness doesn’t mean they are answered perfectly according to our plans, but that they are effective to work out all of God’s plans for his power and his glory. This is the spirit in which we pray, the power of Jesus’s name.

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