



Living the Christian Life Bible Study

Lesson 6c (NIV)

Understanding Prayer (Part 3 of 3)

Student's Name _____ **Unit** _____

Instructor _____

Comments _____

5.0 Hindrances to effective prayer (cont'd)

6. Formalism and hypocrisy are deadly to effective prayer, as Jesus taught in Matthew 6:5-8, *"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 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. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*
7. God also expects us to do our part in bringing the answer to prayer. Prayer is not an excuse for inaction on our part.

Read Exodus 17:8-13; Joshua 7:6-12; and Nehemiah 4:6-9.

Some examples of praying without doing our part might include:

- praying for good test grades and not diligently studying the material;
- praying for parole, while acting up in prison;
- singing without sufficient practice;
- teaching/preaching without study.

4.0 Encouragements for Prayer

As we come to God in prayer, there are several things He encourages us to do that will make our prayer life more effective.

1. As we saw in the previous lesson, our prayers should always be offered to God through Jesus. Paul repeats this admonition three times in the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:18 - *For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

Ephesians 3:12 - *In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*

Ephesians 5:20 - *giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The reason for this is that it is only through Jesus and His death on the cross that we can have access to God the Father.

2. Also as we saw in the previous lesson, prayer must always be according to God's will. One reason for prayer to be according to His will is that He is so much wiser than we are.

Romans 11:33-34 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 34"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"*

3. Prayer should be a regular and continual part of our life. As we mature in our Christian walk, our conversation with God becomes more continual and the attitude of our lives is to recognize that He is always continually with us.

The Bible encourages times set aside specifically for prayer. Psalm 5:3 - *In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.*

We are also encouraged to pray continually, that is to always be in an attitude of prayer, ready to speak to God at any time. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 - *Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

4.0 Encouragements for Prayer (cont'd)

4. Faith is an essential element in prayer. *Without faith it is impossible to please God* (Hebrews 11:6). The rest of Hebrews 11 shows us that our faith must be in God and according to His promises, because *He is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine* (Ephesians 3:20).

A good example of asking in faith according to God's promise is found in James 1:5-7 *5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;*

5. The Bible also encourages God's people to pray together. We read of many occasions that the early church met for prayer.

Acts 1:14 *They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*

Acts 2:42, 46, 47 *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 46Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.*

Acts 12:5 *So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.*

5.0 Hindrances to effective prayer

As a part of encouraging our effective prayer life, God warns us of some attitudes that will hinder our prayer to Him.

1. The first and most obvious hindrance is unconfessed sin. Sin, after all, is rebellion against God, and it is impossible to be in His will when we harbor known sin in our lives.

David expresses this in Psalm 66:18 - *18If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;*

Isaiah 59:2 teaches the same lesson - *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*

2. When we pray, our motives must be pure and not selfish. James 4:3 - *When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*
3. Another hindrance to our prayers is if we are holding a grudge against someone; after all, Jesus admonished us to forgive as we have been forgiven. Mark 11:25 *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*
4. We are even taught that the quality of our home life will affect our prayers. 1 Peter 3:7 - *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*
5. We must not be lazy in our prayers; rather, we must be fervent as we seek God. James 5:17-18 - *Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.*

Paul speaks of Epaphras wrestling in prayer Colossians 4:12 - *Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*