

Day 1

Scheduled Prayer Part 1

In a study like this one, we can run the risk of getting excited about prayer without actually accomplishing it. Instead of merely getting energized about a battle plan for prayer, you need to ensure that you set yourself up for success.

As we continue this journey, take some practical steps to ensure you will be more persistent in prayer. Some prayer times are scheduled and some are spontaneous. We will look at scheduled today and tomorrow and the spontaneous prayer later this week.

Read Jesus' description of how He said we should pray in Matthew 6:5-8. Highlight key words and phrases.

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. 6 But 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. 8 So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

What are three things you discovered about prayer from this passage?

What is Jesus condemning in these verses?

Jesus is not condemning the act of public prayer itself, but rather a wrong motive.

Who is the intended audience for our prayers?

Prayer is ultimately not about you, but about God. It is not about your glory or your will, but about His glory and His will. Jesus encourages true believers to take prayer into a private place because our prayers are not for stroking our ego, but for knowing and pleasing God alone.

Do you have a private room designated for prayer—a prayer closet or a special spot? Do you have a specific time you meet with God? Why or why not?

You may not have the physical space in your home to claim a separate room as a private prayer sanctuary, but you can make some adjustments to set yourself up for success when it comes to prayer. It's time to get practical.

How can you reclaim a space and a time in your home to pray regularly?

Hold yourself accountable. In your notes, write down a place and time that you will set aside for prayer for the remainder of this week.

Pray and commit this blueprint to God and get to work on it today!

Day 2

Scheduled Prayer Part 2

In the video this week we mentioned some people in the Bible who had specific times that they prayed in a scheduled way. Let's look at some of those examples now and see what God might teach us.

David - Psalm 55:16-17, NIV

16 As for me, I call to God,
and the Lord saves me.

17 Evening, morning and noon
I cry out in distress,
and he hears my voice.

When specifically did David pray according to this passage?

David's example is inspiring. It's an honor that we can look back thousands of years and read so many of his specific prayers in the Psalms. Not all of David's prayers were joyful prayers. In the verses shown, he is crying out in distress to God, but notice he does it in a strategic, scheduled way.

Later in the Psalms David talks again about scheduled prayer.
Read Psalm 119:164.

How many times does David say he prays in this passage?

Before we talk more about this, let's look quickly at Daniel.

Daniel - Daniel 6:10-11

10 Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously. 11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.

What you can't tell just by reading these verses is that Daniel was in a time of extreme trouble during this season of his life. He knew that he could be arrested and killed for his faith. Even then, Daniel prayed and trusted. God answered his prayers and rescued him from the mouths of lions.

How many times on average would you estimate that you pray each day?

How many of those times are scheduled and how many are spontaneous?

You may not be able to start to have seven times of scheduled prayer a day, or even three. But, we challenge you to at least start with one time. If you desire to add more, then great, but at least start with one scheduled time and see if you can keep it up throughout the course of this study. We are confident that as you devote scheduled time to prayer, you are going to see it impact your life.

Write down a specific time you plan to pray this week. Jot a reminder on a sticky note or set an alarm on your phone as a way to remember the time you've committed to scheduled prayer.

We will talk more about spontaneous prayers over the next few days, as both spontaneous and scheduled prayers are important in a believer's life.

Day 3

Spontaneous Prayer Part 1

It is extremely helpful to have a scheduled time and a sacred space in which you pray. Scripture teaches us to pray continually. Unexpected obstacles will charge at you this week and you need to be prepared for those spontaneous times of prayer.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and write it out in your notes.

Depending on the translation of Scripture you use, the word used in this verse might be constantly, regularly, continually, or without ceasing.

Do you believe that this instruction is actually possible? Why or why not?

What would it look like for this verse to be practically applied in your life this week?

On a corporate level, churches can “pray without ceasing” by taking turns and praying in shifts throughout the day. On an individual level, we can make prayer a natural and regular part of our day.

As you think through your schedule over the next 24 hours, you’ll realize there are probably some times where you are going to need to go to God in prayer and your prayer closet will not be accessible.

In the next 24 hours, when would be pivotal times when you could pause and pray?

Identifying pivotal times to pray is important and one of the first steps in becoming more devoted to prayer. But we can’t always predict when we will need to take time to pray. In order to truly put 1 Thessalonians 5:17 into practice we must remain in close fellowship with God and be aware of His presence in our lives. The ultimate goal of course is for prayer to be a regular and frequent habit throughout your day.

Come up with some practical reminders. You could include hanging notes in strategic places, setting reminders on your phone, or teaming up with a friend to hold each other accountable. Write down at least three tangible reminders you can use to increase your prayer frequency over the next 24 hours. Now, commit it to God in prayer.

Today we will finish our time together discussing different times of spontaneous prayers. The more you get in the habit of bringing conversation with God into a daily rhythm in your life, the more you can sense and feel God’s presence and guidance day in and day out. Newness

Any time there is something new in your life, it is worth spending some time praying about it and dedicating it to God.

What is something new in your life you can pray for now? Some ideas could be: a new house, new car, new friend, a new believer who may

have just found Jesus, or even simply a new day or new season of life.

Write down two new things in your life right now and pray for them.

Needs

From day to day we will have different needs arise in our life. God knows what these needs are and longs to come to you and meet you in those needs. Maybe you have a financial need, an emotional need, or a physical need.

Write down two needs and spend a moment praying about them.

Day 4

Spontaneous Prayer Part 2

Today we will finish our discussion about specific reminders for spontaneous prayers. Remember, when conversation with God becomes a part of your daily rhythm, you will be able to sense His presence and guidance even more. Let's finish looking at occasions that should prompt us towards spontaneous prayer.

Confusion

Isaiah 55:9 says that God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. We often can't see the big picture, so it is understandable to have times of confusion, wondering why something isn't working out like we thought it would.

What is something that is confusing in your life right now that you might want to ask God to help you see more clearly? Write that down and pray about it now.

Crisis

Perhaps you are in a time of crisis right now. If not, I am guessing you can think of someone who is in a crisis and could use your prayers. In our social media-driven world, people post about the struggles they are having online all the time. Just take a look at one of your social media feeds, and when you see or notice someone in a crisis—stop and pray.

Write any situation that God brings to your mind in this category and take a moment to lift it back up to Him in prayer.

Sin

Nothing blocks your prayer life like sin you refuse to confess and surrender to God. We need to pray for forgiveness and repent in order to re-establish healthy communion with the Father. So often our initial reaction to sin is to cover it up, dismiss it, and try to forget about it and move on. We should never put petty sin above our loving God. If you get in the habit of confessing your sin to God you will find yourself coming to Him more often for all areas in your life because you are freed up from the weight of that sin.

Write down the names or initials of specific sins you need to confess, if you feel comfortable doing that here, and pray that God would forgive you and heal your heart in that area. Ask Him to help you find your satisfaction in Him instead.

Stress

We know that even now something is tugging on your mind, maybe something that you have to do, or perhaps a relationship that is challenging. It is hard to get away from the everyday stresses of life. Because they are such a daily issue in our lives, though, we should get in the habit of pausing and bringing those stresses to our Father.

Take a moment and write down the top three things you are stressed about at this time and remind God of your need for Him during those stressful moments.

Blessings

Now for a positive turn. God is always good and He longs to give good gifts to His children (Matt. 7:11). Even during dark times in our lives, we can list off multiple blessings that God has given to us. Joy follows gratefulness.

Take some time to write some of those down and thank God that He is good.

Burdens

Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28, HCSB

God wants us to bring Him our burdens. Let's take Him up on that now and anytime we feel burdened for the lost, our culture, or those in desperate need.

Note some of the burdens that come to mind here and bring those to the Lord.

Requests

This is often the spontaneous part of prayer that comes easy. When others request prayer, we should lift them up. God also wants us to bring our requests to Him but to do so with the right motives. James 4:3 is clear on that:

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

A good exercise to do as you bring your requests to God is to do a gut check to be sure your motives are in the right place. We should never let lust, greed, or pride motivate our prayers.

Take a moment to bring your requests before God.
Rejoicing

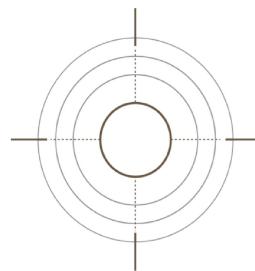
Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” We have so much to rejoice over, even in hard times. Successes, accomplishments, answered prayers, and celebrations should prompt prayers of praise and thanksgiving back to God.

Spend a moment writing reasons to rejoice and celebrating something good in prayer.

Day 5

Prayer Strategy Target

As promised, in each Day 5 we are going to spend some time working through our Prayer Strategy Target. Here is a reminder of what it looks like:



Last week we evaluated our vertical relationship with God and were reminded of how prayer is made possible through Jesus' death on the cross.

This week we want to look at the horizontal line across the middle of the target. It represents being aligned well with others in order for

prayer to be most effective. God wants us to walk in love and in unity with others. Bitterness toward others can hinder our prayer lives. Also, if we have wronged others and not made it right, God wants us to stop delaying and to make things right.

We will hit on this topic in more depth throughout our time together over the next few weeks but let's pause and evaluate where we are on that horizontal line just for a moment together.

An interesting passage in Genesis 11 describes the construction of the tower of Babel. In this biblical account, ungodly people decided to build a city with an enormous tower for their own glory and prestige. They planned it out and began the challenge, and at first found success in their efforts. But God looked down from heaven and basically said, "Because of their unity, nothing will be impossible for them" (see v. 6). So He intervened. He divided them by changing their communication into numerous languages to prevent them from finishing their prideful monument. In the confusion and chaos, they abandoned the project and separated themselves by language, spreading out across the land.

What is so striking about this passage of Scripture is that God Himself noted that when people are unified, they are able to exert tremendous power and momentum. Even ungodly people! So imagine how powerful unity can be for people who worship and obey the God of the universe. If they seek the Lord and act in unity, nothing can stop them.

That's why the Enemy does everything possible to keep God's people divided. Because once we come together in unity, we gain momentum and take ground for the kingdom. United prayer is powerful. But prayer from a divided people ... well, not so much. This is why removing bitterness toward others and choosing to forgive is so crucial. In fact, any pride or selfishness should be seen as an enemy of unified prayer.

In John 17, Jesus prayed a beautiful prayer, asking God to unify believers into one body, that the world would know He was sent by God to bring salvation to the world (v. 21). Psalm 133:1 echoes the same theme: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!"

God loves and blesses unity. It speaks volumes about the body of Christ when we worship together and love one another as God intended. It also draws attention to our Savior, who died to cleanse our sins and now lives to intercede for us to God the Father. When

people see unity, they see purpose, love, and power. It's attractive and beautiful. And when an army of people work together to accomplish a goal, they become a formidable force indeed.

John 13:34-35 says:

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

Jesus' words here are clear and the model Jesus gave us through His life and ministry makes it even more clear—we are to love our neighbor. And our neighbor is anyone and everyone who is a part of our lives.

So, before we can tackle this concept of prayer in a serious way, we need to not only evaluate our relationship with God, but also our relationship with others.

We will talk about this concept more in detail in the coming weeks, but for now, take a moment and consider any strained or broken relationships that you have in your life. Do not only bring them to the Lord in prayer, but ask Him what you need to do in order to make some of these relationships right again.

Relationships are complicated, we know, but the Bible says:

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Romans 12:18

Take a moment and talk to the Lord about any relationships that come to mind that need to be made right. For the sake of Christ and for the sake of gaining a more powerful prayer life, make a point to do something toward reconciliation this week. Pray about it now.