

Session 9

Power of Prayer

Key Scriptures:

Matthew 6:9-13	Lord's Prayer
Romans 8:26-28	Holy Spirit prays
James 5:16	Prayer of the righteous
Psalms 37:4-6	Desires of your heart
Ephesians 1:15-19	Prayer to know God
Colossians 1:9-12	Prayer to produce fruit & grow in knowledge
Ephesians 3:16-19	Prayer for strength and to be rooted love
James 5:13-16	Prayer for healing
2 Corinthians 1:10-11	Prayer for protection for others
2 Thessalonians 3:1-2	Prayer for Gospel message and protection
2 Corinthians 4:4	Spiritual blindness

Objective: • to understand the role of prayer as facilitating changes and spiritual growth in us and others

The Big Picture

Prayer is like breathing—it's far easier to do than it is to explain. Breathing's regular, involuntary rhythms go mostly unnoticed except in times of physical stress. Paul instructs the Thessalonians to "pray continually," (1 Thes. 5:17) which is much like saying, "breathe continually." As with breathing, though prayer is heightened in times of stress and need, it should be part of our daily moment-by-moment experience with God.

Prayer is the intimate whisperings of communion between the Creator and His beloved. It's the tender touch of the Heavenly Father to His children. It's as simple as breathing, yet so difficult that God does not leave it entirely to us, because we do not know how we ought to pray (Romans 8:26).

Like breathing, prayer is at times quiet, steady, almost unnoticed. At other times it is labored, deep, and intense. At times it flows as quiet communion with God, while at other times comes with deep cries of pain in the face of life-threatening peril.

Through the years, believers have written about the many facets of prayer, which fill countless bookshelves. The subject is seemingly boundless in scope and requires wisdom well beyond Solomon's to understand. Such an apparently simple act is in no way simplistic.

Prayer moves the heart of God to action for His own sake and His own glory—and in that context, it moves Him to act on our behalf. It's prayer that releases the power of God in our lives for change. It's a critically important part that

affects our spiritual growth. Through prayer, we change. But, through prayer for others, we also are participating with God in changing others.

It's not prayer that has the power to change—it's God. Yet, prayer is the means by which we entreat God to move and to cause us to grow in Christ. Putting is another way; *prayer helps facilitate spiritual growth in us and in others.*

We don't change ourselves or anyone else, God does. However, we are not outside God's process. We have the responsibility and privilege to pray that God would change us and others. In that sense, through prayer we are asking for God's "kingdom resources"—His provisions—to be released to His people in order to bring change within us and in order to accomplish His purposes for His own glory.

In our discussion about the changes that come as we follow Christ, we will look at prayer only from the point of view of its role in releasing God's power for change. Prayer doesn't bring the change—God does. Prayer is not power—God is. We participate in God's work in our lives through prayer.

Teaching Points:

I. Our prayers play an active part in advancing God's kingdom rule. (Matthew 6:9-13)

A. Vertical Prayer: Our prayer should be God-focused.

1. Prayer is "vertical" in the sense that its focus is on God, not on us, or our needs.
2. The Lord's prayer begins with God—"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name"
3. Prayer comes from our relationship with God and is focused on His nature.
4. Prayer is an act of worship.
5. We do not know how to pray as we ought. (Romans 8:26-28)

⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today our daily bread. ¹² Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

(Matthew 6:9-13)

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

(Romans 8:26-28)

B. Powerful Prayer: Our prayers ask God to release His power.

1. Prayer is powerful because God is powerful.
2. God powerfully answers the prayers of the righteous person.

¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

(James 5:16)

3. We need powerful prayer because of spiritual opposition.

C. Kingdom Prayer: Our prayers should be kingdom focused.

1. Jesus prays, *“your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*
 - a) Kingdom prayer is directed toward what God wants—the coming of His kingdom where His will is obeyed because He is Supreme.
 - b) We do not bring about God’s kingdom—He does.
2. We have an active part in praying for God’s kingdom purposes through our prayers.
 - a) Praying, *“Your kingdom come,”* is not simply an acknowledgement of the fact that the kingdom is coming—In such prayer we become active participants in bearing testimony to God’s work.
 - (1) We do not bring in God’s kingdom—He does.
 - (2) Neither are we inactive bystanders in God’s work.
 - (3) Rather, we have an active role through prayer whereby we bear testimony to the reality of God’s coming kingdom.
 - b) In the sense of affirmation—or *“declaration”*—our prayers participate in God’s kingdom work on earth.
3. Through our prayers God’s *“kingdom resources”*—His provisions—are released.
 - a) Part of His kingdom purpose is to bring changes within us to conform us to Christ.

- b) He answers our prayers to accomplish His purposes for His own glory.
- II. Through our prayers God meets our needs, brings spiritual growth to His people, and allows the Gospel to be proclaimed with power.

A. Request Prayer: In prayer we can ask God to meet our needs.

- 1. God meets our needs through our prayer.
 - a) For daily provisions—*“Give us our daily bread.”*
 - b) For debts and offenses—*“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”*
 - c) For strength against sin—*“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”*
- 2. Prayer is not offered simply to get what we think we need or want.

- a) We may pray for our needs *because God desires to meet our needs.*

- b) But, as our hearts are in submission to God, the “desires of our hearts” reflect what He wants for

<p>⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵ Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: ⁶ He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. (Psalm 37:4-6)</p>

- us. We want what He wants. (Psalm 37:4-6)

- 3. Prayer shows our humble dependence on God, and in the act of humble prayer God changes us.

B. Intercessory Prayer: We pray for others to know God and grow in Him.

- 1. Our prayers release “kingdom resources” for changes leading to spiritual growth and maturity. [Definition: *“Kingdom resources” refers to God’s provisions given to His people to accomplish His purposes in their lives and in the world.*]

2. These kingdom resources cause believers:

- a) to know God (Ephesians 1:15-19)
- b) to grow in Him and do His work (Colossians 1:9-12)
- c) to be strengthened in Christ (Ephesians 3:16-19)
- d) to be rooted in love and together know Christ's love (Ephesians 3:16-19)
- e) to be healed—esp. if connected with sin (James 5:13-16)

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

(Ephesians 1:15-19)

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰ And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

(Colossians 1:9-12)

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

(Ephesians 3:16-19)

¹³ Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

(James 5:13-16)

C. Evangelistic Prayer: Our prayer asks God to make the proclamation of the Gospel powerful.

1. We pray to protect those proclaiming the Gospel. (2 Corinthians 1:10-11)
2. We pray that the message of the Gospel be received and spread. (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2)
3. We pray for the reception of the Gospel because people are spiritually blinded (2 Cor. 4:4).

¹⁰ He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, ¹¹ as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

(2 Corinthians 1:10-11)

Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. ² And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith.

(2 Thessalonians 3:1-2)

⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

(2 Corinthians 4:4)

Group Discussion:	
	<u>Warm-up Question:</u> Can you share one time when you were certain that God answered your prayers?
	<u>Discussion #1:</u> It might be said that typically our prayer focuses almost exclusively on the physical, financial, or emotional needs of others. Do you agree? Is it a relatively new thought to you to understand prayer as helping to facilitate spiritual growth in ourselves and others?
	<u>Discussion #2:</u> Do you find it sometimes difficult to know how to pray with God's kingdom in mind? Why? How can you develop a more kingdom-focused mindset in prayer?
	<u>Discussion #3:</u> How might you specifically pray for your children, or for others in the church, to know God and to grow in Him? Over what specific areas would you pray? How might you pray for others concerning their spiritual gifts? How might you pray for protection?
The Bottom Line:	Through prayer we play an active part in the advancement of God's kingdom rule by asking God to release His "kingdom resources"—spiritual provisions—for us and others.