

# **TREK 101**

# **Christian**

# **Discipleship**

**SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

**By Donald S. Whitney**

**LESSON 3 PRAYER**

**“Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying  
God with deep reverence and fear.” Philippians 2:12b  
(NLT)**

**A Ministry of Rockpointe Church**

# Lesson 3

## PRAYER

### PRAYER

(This Lesson Adapted From Donald Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines For The Christian Life*)

#### A. PRAYER IS VITAL BUT PRACTICED AS OPTIONAL

“One of the main reasons for a lack of Godliness is prayerlessness.” Donald Whitney  
 “For Christians prayer is like breathing. Unfortunately many believers hold their spiritual breaths for long periods, thinking brief moments with God are sufficient to allow them to survive.” John MacArthur

1. Surveys reveal that many Christians pray less than 5 minutes a day despite the knowledge of how critical prayer is to spiritual growth as reflected in Whitney's quote. Why do you think many Christians pray so little?
2. How do you know when you haven't been praying enough?

#### B. WHAT IS PRAYER?

1. Conversation with God: listening and talking. Communicating with God builds an intimate relationship with Him.
2. Release of God's power and authority 2 Cor10:3
3. Bringing down to earth the will of God in heaven
  - i. “It is enforcing Christ's victory over Satan. It is implementing upon earth Heaven's decisions concerning the affairs of men. Therefore prayer is where the action is.” Paul Billheimer, Destined for the Throne.
4. Opening of our hearts and minds to God.
5. An offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies. Westminster Catechism.
6. **Application**. How does our definition of prayer determine the frequency and content of prayer?

#### C. PRAYER IS EXPECTED

1. Jesus expects us to pray.
  - i. **Read Aloud Matthew 6:5-7: Underline “when”** 5 “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. Matthew 6:5–7 (NIV84)

- ii. See also Luke 18:1
- iii. Jesus modeled prayer.
  1. Prayed early morning. Mark 1:35)
  2. At night. Matthew 14:23
  3. Alone. John 6:15
  4. In public. Matthew 14:19
  5. All night. Luke 6:12
  6. During miracles. John 11:41–42
  7. When facing major decisions. Luke 6:12–13
  8. Blessing a meal Luke 9:16
  9. Personal crisis –Mark 14:36
  10. For self .John 17:1
  11. For others. John 17:9
  12. Taught followers to pray –Luke 11:1
  13. Tied faith and prayer –Matthew 21:21–22

## 2. Scripture affirms expectation

- i. **Read aloud Colossians 4:2** Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Colossians 4:2 (NIV84)
- ii. **Read aloud 1 Thessalonians 5:17** pray continually; 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NIV84)
- iii. **Read aloud Hebrews 4:16** Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:16 (NIV84)
- iv. **Application.**
  1. What does the word “devote” suggest about priority?
  2. If “pray continually” does not mean that we do nothing but pray, what does it mean?
  3. Since both the words “devote” and “pray” are commands (imperatives), what exempts us from the expectation to pray?
  4. The Hebrews passage is phrased more of an invitation (opportunity) than a command (obligation). What does this passage suggest we miss if we don’t pray consistently and persistently?
  5. Have you ever felt that prayer was more obligation than opportunity? If so, why? If not, why not?

## D. REASONS WE DON’T PRAY AS WE SHOULD

1. Lack of Discipline. Prayer is not planned.
2. Doesn’t make any difference.
3. Do not sense God is near (and perhaps cares)

4. No need to pray (can handle the situation without God's help)
5. Haven't learned to pray
6. **Application.**
  - i. Which reason do you think is the most commonly held?
  - ii. Which reason is the most plausible to you?

## E. PRAYER IS LEARNED

1. **Read aloud Luke 11:1** <sup>1</sup> One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." Luke 11:1 (NIV84)
  - i. What surprises you about the disciples' request?
  - ii. How does that relate to this sub-topic that prayer is learned?
2. Ways we can learn to pray
  - i. By praying.
  - ii. By meditating on Scripture
  - iii. By praying with others
  - iv. By reading books about prayer
    1. Read some of the classics about prayer written by Andrew Murray, E. M Bounds, and Brother Lawrence (The Practice of the Presence of God)
    2. Read biographies of such prayer warriors as George Muller, David Brainerd, J. Hudson Taylor, and John Hyde (known as Praying Hyde).
3. **Application.**
  - i. Has anyone ever taught you about prayer?
  - ii. Read Psalm 19:14. How can meditation on Scripture help us pray more effectively?
  - iii. Why are many Christian reluctant to pray out loud with others?

## F. PRAYER IS ANSWERED

1. **Read Aloud Matthew 7:7-8** <sup>7</sup> "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV84)
  - i. The words "ask", "seek" and "knock" are all active commands which means to keep on asking, seeking and knocking. What does this suggest about the relationship of persistence to pray and answers to prayer?
  - ii. Jesus seems to suggest all prayer is answered. Is that a correct interpretation of this verse?
2. Reasons that God answers our prayers with a "no"
  - i. Our relationships with other people are not right. Matthew 6:14-15
  - ii. Motives and requests are totally selfish. James 4:3

- iii. Wavering faith. James 1:6-7
- iv. Unconfessed sins. Isaiah 59:1-3
- v. So that we will get serious about reading His Word and applying it to our lives. Proverbs 28:9

## **G. AXIOMS OF THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER**

1. Prayer is expected and necessary for Godliness.
2. Prayer is a learned discipline.
3. Prayer is answered so we must persistently pray.

## APPENDIX A

### LEARNING TO PRAY – PATTERNS OF PRAYER

The following are two patterns that you can use in your prayer time that can help you establish a discipline of prayer.

#### A. USING THE LORD'S PRAYER AS A MODEL

Jesus was a person of prayer that allowed Him to do the Father's will. His disciples observed his miracles, his teachings, and his actions but the thing that seemed to impress them the most was His prayer life. In Luke 11:1-4, they asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus responded with what we call "The Lord's Prayer". We can call it "The Model Prayer" because it gives us a model to use in our prayer life. In Matthew 6:9-16, Jesus gives us seven (7) petitions of this prayer:

1. **PRAISE** –Our Father who are in heaven
  - i. Praise is honoring and ascribing worth to God. It is a declaration and adoration of God for who He is. Praise is our response to God because of His majesty and saving actions.
  - ii. We praise God for WHO He is or for His characteristics such as: Self-existent, Infinite, Sovereignty, Constant and Consistent, Holiness, Righteousness, Justice, Truth, Faithfulness, Love, Grace, and Mercy.
  - iii. We **thank** God for WHAT He has done. Thank God for all the blessings He gives you. Write them down and you'll be overwhelmed by God's gracious kindness to you.
  - iv. Praise results in living in the awareness God is with us all the time and encourages us to conform our lives to His will.
2. **EXPECTATION/ANTICIPATION** –Your Kingdom Come
  - i. God's Kingdom is His sovereign reign in your life and the world.
  - ii. This petition can be an evangelistic appeal for God to save our lost family and friends we name before Him.
  - iii. It is also our desire for Jesus' Second Coming so His glorious Kingdom might be eternally established.
3. **SUBMISSION/SURRENDER** – Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven
  - i. This petition is about establishing the right priorities in our lives. It is a prayer of surrender so our lives can be used for God's purposes. "Not my will but yours be done"
  - ii. We can pray this for ourselves, our family, friends, and our church leaders.
4. **PROVISION**- give us today for our daily bread
  - i. This petition invites us to ask God for things. In doing so we recognize our dependence upon God for everything we have and ask for.

- ii. By recognizing our dependence upon God, this petition protects us from worry (we trust God for our daily needs) and selfishness (the “us” in this petition encourages us to pray for or intercede for others as well).
5. **PARDON THROUGH REPENTANCE/CONFESSION**- forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors
- i. Sin interrupts our fellowship and usefulness to God. Unforgiveness stands as a barrier to God’s forgiveness and interferes with our peace of mind, happiness, and satisfaction.
  - ii. Forgiveness is the only way to get rid of the emotional garbage of guilt, resentment, hurt.
  - iii. Before we RECEIVE forgiveness, we must FORGIVE OTHERS. Matthew 6:14-15.
6. **PROTECTION/DELIVERANCE**- lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil (or evil one)
- i. We have an enemy: Satan. He is tireless in his efforts to destroy you. 1 Peter 5:8
  - ii. God promises deliverance from evil (2 Timothy 4:18), we would not experience more temptations than we can bear with His support (1 Corinthians 10:13) and gives us spiritual armor to protect us in battle (Ephesians 6:10-18)
7. **PRAISES/ SHOUTS OF VICTORY** - yours is kingdom, power, glory forever
- i. Jesus encourages us to begin and end our prayers with praise.
  - ii. We in essence say: “God, no matter what happens in my life today, I’m starting this day with you. I don’t know what it’s going to bring, but no matter what good or bad happens, ultimately we win. No one can take away my salvation.”

## B. ACTS MODEL

A.C.T.S. is an acronym representing a powerful model of prayer: adoration, confessions, thanksgiving, and supplication (intercession).

1. **ADORATION:**
- i. Begin the prayer by adoring God.
  - ii. Praise and worship HIM. This is a time for telling God what He means to you and how much you love Him.
  - iii. Tell God how magnificent/holy/glorious He is, to focus solely on Him, to tell Him all the wondrous beautiful things about Him you love.
2. **CONFESSION:**
- i. Unconfessed sin creates a barrier between you and God and can hinder your prayers.
  - ii. Confess your sin to Him with an apologetic and repentant

- iii. Ask God to bring to mind any sins you may not be aware of so that you may repent and confess.
- iv. Claim 1 John 1:9.

**3. THANKSGIVING:**

- i. Count your blessings, thanking and praising God for all He has given you and done for you in life.
- ii. You may begin with the basics such as family, friends, food, shelter, safety, job, health, healing.
- iii. Thank Him for hearing your prayers and for forgiving your sins, for His all-consuming love for you.
- iv. Thank Him for His promises to you.

**4. SUPPLICATION:**

- i. Intercede for yourself and others.
- ii. Ask God to supply needs for ourselves and others.
- iii. Be specific in your prayers.
- iv. If you are praying for some else but don't know exactly what that person needs, ask God to lead you in prayer



## APPENDIX B

### COMBINING PRAYER AND SCRIPTURE READING TO HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME WITH GOD

A quiet time or personal devotional time is a daily time of fellowship with God through reading Scripture and prayer. “I just don’t have time” is a common reason many give for not doing this. We all have the same amount of time each week –168 hours. We don’t have time for everything so we decide what is really important and do that. Whether having a daily fellowship time with God or whatever is a matter of **priority** not a matter of time.

#### A. WHY SHOULD WE HAVE A DAILY TIME OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD?

Our purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy His presence. As Christians, we want to grow in our relationship with God—to know Him better, love Him more deeply, and act like Him more consistently. One way to do this is spending daily time with God. Here’s some reasons why we need such a time:

1. **Fellowship with God.** We all are created in the “image of God”. Only mankind of all of God’s creation has the capacity to fellowship with our Creator so enjoy Him.
2. **Strength to face daily issues/struggles.** We need God to help us face the things that come our way each day whether at home, on the job or at school. We all face hard times—health, relationship or job issues. Jesus found strength in daily fellowship with the Father so it was a priority for Him. Jesus was never too busy or too independent to keep in touch. If Jesus needed such a time, how much more we do.
3. **Spiritual health.** Our souls and spirits need daily nourishment and refreshment. Imagine going without food for several days. We become weak and sick. The same happens to our spiritual lives when we neglect spiritual food. Without it, we become spiritually weak and sick.
4. **Spiritual cleansing.** We take regular baths for cleanliness and health. Our regular time with God keeps us sensitive to sin so we can confess them and remain a “clean” vessel for God to use to do His will and purpose. You would not cook food in a pan that was “dirty” from yesterday’s meal. You’d wash it and then use it. God cannot use us for His purpose if we are “dirty” with sin and rebellion.
5. **Worship God and recognize our dependence upon Him.** We can easily push God out of our lives with our fast and busy lifestyle. The less we think about God, the less we depend upon Him and the more we replace Him with someone or something else. We can even begin to think we can live without God or even worse—think there is no hope or God doesn’t care about us. A daily time with God prevents this from happening.

## B. HOW CAN WE HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME?

Things are easier to do when we have a plan.

1. **Begin with a proper attitude.** A daily time with God is not a “pill” nor is it something we have to do. It is something we get to do. We can enjoy God’s presence. This is a special time of worship so we want to be as alert and refreshed as we can. We spend time with God to get to know Him better. The more we know Him, the more eager we are to obey Him
2. **Select a specific time.** When is the best time? The best time for you is when you are at your best. This is a time when you are most in control, most wide awake and most refreshed. Choosing a specific time each day allows you to be most consistent. What is your best time? Mark your calendar as a reminder to you and family members this is your appointment time with Jesus.
3. **Decide how much time.** This is an individual choice and varies from person to person. A suggested minimum time is 15 minutes a day. Start with how much time you can spend. It might be 5 minutes for now and you can expand it. Don’t get discouraged. A consistent 6 minutes, for example, is better than not at all or being inconsistent trying for 15 minutes. Focus on quality time with God not merely how much.
4. **Choose a special place.** Choose a quiet place where you can be alone with God without being disturbed or disturbing others. Make it a sacred place whether in your bedroom, a closet, garage or in your backyard.
5. **Have a plan.** We do better with a plan rather than just jumping into it.
 

Suggestions:

  - i. Gather your Bible (readable translation), a notebook (to write down your thoughts), and if available, a hymnal (for praise, prayer and commitment)
  - ii. As you begin, just relax before God. “Be still and know I am God”. Establish a reverent mood.
  - iii. Pray briefly to ask God to cleanse and guide you. Consider this as a prayer: “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.” Psalm 139:23 (NIV)
  - iv. Read a section of Scripture. Perhaps begin with one of the letters (Romans to Jude) in the New Testament. Read a section (not too large), slowly, several times, and aloud if possible. Allow the words to nourish you and help you get to know God better.
  - v. Meditate on it. Think about it during the day. Perhaps find a verse to memorize.
  - vi. Write down a sentence or two of what you discovered or how God spoke to you.
  - vii. Time of prayer. Use one of the patterns of prayer listed in Appendix A.

### C. HOW TO KEEP YOUR DAILY TIME FRESH?

If we do the same thing the same way over and over, it can be dull or lose its benefit.

Here's ways to keep your daily time fresh and meaningful:

1. Use a hymnal. If you have a hymnal, you can sing (or repeat) the words of a hymn as a means of praise, a prayer, or even a commitment to God.
2. Use a devotional guide. For a short period, use a devotional guide rather than reading a section of Scripture. Don't replace this with bible reading for a long period. "Our Daily Bread" or "Jesus Calling" are two commonly used.
3. Spend the whole time just giving thanks or intercession for a friend or yourself in a difficult time.
4. Spend the whole time memorizing Scripture.
5. Write out your prayers rather than just saying it out loud or to yourself

### D. WHEN IT GETS HARD, WHAT DO I DO?

Satan will battle you and do everything he can to prevent you from starting or being consistent. Your discipline of daily time is in proportion to your priority.

1. Expect dry spells when you don't seem to get much out of them. Don't judge the value of it by your feelings. Feelings come and go. If you have a quiet time only when you "feel" like it, Satan will make sure you never feel like it. You may struggle becoming consistent.
2. Don't get discouraged if you miss a day or two. You don't quite eating if you miss a meal. You just eat more the next time. People say it usually take at least 3 weeks to get familiar with a new task. It takes another 3 weeks to make it a habit. So for you to have a habit of fellowshiping with God, you will need to do it for 6 weeks every day. While that seems like a long time, getting to know God better and pleasing God is worth it.

If you are convinced having a daily quiet time with God is what you need to do, you might want to pray this prayer of commitment: **"Lord I commit myself to spending a definite time with you every day, no matter what the cost. I am depending on your strength to help me be consistent"**.