

"PRAYER AND PROVIDENCE"
Embry Hills church of Christ

LESSON ONE: INTRODUCTION

(To be completed during the first class session)

- 1) Using your Bible, List four Old Testament examples of prayer and God's response to each prayer. Give scriptural reference.

- 2) List four New Testament examples of prayer and God's response to each prayer. Give scriptural reference.

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**LESSON TWO:
PRESUPPOSITIONS OF PRAYER AND PROVIDENCE**

INTRODUCTION:

1. By "presupposition" we mean to "take for granted"; "assume to start with." We refer to these as givens. For example, a baby necessitates a mother (see I Corinthians 11:11); a watch demands a watchmaker; a building demands a builder (see Hebrews 3:4). Providence demands that there be a God.
2. We soon discover in teaching the Bible to people that we first have to deal with the question, "Is there really a God?" There's no need to talk about the Bible as the word of God- until we address the matter of whether there is a God who has spoken in the first place!

EXERCISE TO ILLUSTRATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRESUPPOSITIONS:

Before we examine prayer, state briefly any presuppositions you find in the following biblical texts:

1. Acts 26:8
2. Romans 8:32
3. Hebrews 11:17-19
4. Romans 10:13-15
5. Hebrews 11:6

PRESUPPOSITIONS IN THE BIBLE THAT RELATE TO PRAYER:

Read carefully the following texts. What does each say about God and prayer?

1. Ephesians 3:20
2. Matthew 10:29-31
3. Hebrews 5:13
4. Matthew 6:8
5. James 1:5-7
6. Proverbs 1:24-33
7. Proverbs 28:9

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LESSON THREE:
PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST (Part One)

In this lesson, we will examine the significance of prayer in the life of our Lord and our Saviour, Christ Jesus.

We find prayer directly connected with important events in His life:

- a. His baptism (Luke 3:21)
- b. Before He chose the apostles (Luke 6:12-13)
- c. At His transfiguration (Luke 9:28-31)
- d. Before His arrest and crucifixion (Matthew 26:36-46)
- e. During His crucifixion (Matthew 27:46; Luke 23:34; Luke 23:46)

We see clearly how His example of a prayerful attitude affected His disciples. "And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.'" (Luke 11:1)

Christ's example of prayer is perfect... yet very powerful. Jesus Christ was deity that "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), yet He never ceased to pray to His Father! His example to us is clear, both in His teachings of how to pray (in Luke 11), and in the example He left us.

EXPLORE THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES AND BE READY TO DISCUSS AT LENGTH:

1. Luke 5:15-16
2. Luke 22:31-32
3. Hebrews 5:7-9
4. Matthew 26:39, 42-44
5. Matthew 27:46
6. Luke 23:34
7. Luke 23:46
8. John 12:27-30
9. John 17:14-15
10. John 17:20-21

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LESSON FOUR:
PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST (Part Two)

I. CHRIST AND PRAYER SCRIPTURE

BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURE:

1. Christ's prayers at the great events of His life:
 - a. Luke 3:21
 - b. Luke 6:12ff
 - c. Luke 9:18
 - d. Luke 9:29
 - e. Luke 22:39-46
 - f. Luke 23:46
2. His prayers in the course of His ministry:
 - a. Luke 5:16
 - b. Luke 11:1
 - c. John 12:27ff
 - d. Mark 6:46
3. His prayers at His miracles:
 - a. Mark 1:35
 - b. Mark 6:41
 - c. Mark 7:34
 - d. John 11:41
4. His prayers for others:
 - a. John 17:6-19
 - b. John 17:20-26
 - c. Luke 23:34
 - d. Luke 22:32

II. APPLICATION

Applying what you've learned so far, make practical application using what we've discussed about Christ and prayer and what you learn from James 5:16. (Practical application means YOUR life!)

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LESSON FIVE: THE POWER OF PRAYER

INTRODUCTION:

1. Christ left an example for us to follow.
 - a. Last lesson: I Peter 2:21; Hebrews 5:7-9; Luke 11:1.
 - b. Christ performed miracles in connection with prayer:
 - 1) Mark 6:41
 - 2) Mark 7:34
 - 3) John 11:41-44
2. The Old Testament has many examples of prayer in connection with miracles:
 - a. I Kings 18:36-39
 - b. II Kings 19:15-19, 35-37
3. The New Testament, too has examples of prayer connected with miracles.
 - a. Acts 12:5-11
 - b. Acts 9:36-42

DISCUSSION:

1. What is a miracle?

2. Why did God answer prayers through miracles in the Bible?

3. Why does God not answer prayers through miracles today?

4. God answer prayers. The following texts shed light on how He does so today:
 - a. James 5:16

 - b. Ephesians 3:20

 - c. Ephesians 6:10-18

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LESSON SIX: MIRACLE AND PROVIDENCE

1. Last week's lesson briefly hinted at the "meat" of this lesson, which will study in detail the differences between the miracles of God and the providence of God:
 - a. **MIRACLE:** An occurrence used by God to confirm the word, confirm one of His servants, or to show His compassion, outside of the physical "laws" established by God. Biblical examples include the raising of someone that was dead three days, making iron float, the restoration of someone lame from birth, walking on water, walking in a fiery furnace unharmed, and an angel from God holding shut the jaws of hungry lions.
 - b. **PROVIDENCE:** God working within the physical "laws" He established. Examples include Joseph's bondage so that he might bring his family into the protection of Egypt, the rainfall in answer to Elijah's prayer, Paul's imprisonment for the spread of the Gospel, the downfall of Jerusalem, and the downfall of Rome. More subtle than a miracle ... but just as powerful.
2. Do we have a Biblical right to expect miraculous answers to our prayers today? It's not a matter of the power of God ... but His eternal purpose.
 - a. Christ's death happened once (Hebrews 9:26-28)
 - b. God's revelation was delivered once (Jude 3), and it is final. (God's purposes have been fulfilled.)
 - c. Miracles were involved in the crucifixion and the revelation of God's word, but what resulted never need be done again.
3. Why then, did God perform miracles in the Bible?
 - a. To show His power and majesty.
 - b. To confirm His servants.
 - c. To confirm the word.
 - d. Out of compassion.
 - e. To punish the unrighteous.
4. Key point: Examine the scripture. When God didn't need to perform a miracle to accomplish a task, He didn't. He worked providentially.

DISCUSSION:

1. In your own words (not mine), what's the difference between miracle and providence?
2. Give five examples and referring scripture (other than the lesson's) of God's providence.
3. How does God answer our prayers today? Give scripture.

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LESSONS SEVEN AND EIGHT: FOR WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY?

1. Before we examine proper prayer, we must first examine what the scripture teaches about improper practices of prayer. Read and comment:
 - a. Proverbs 28:9

 - b. James 4:3

 - c. I John 5:14-16

 - d. Matthew 6:14-15

 - e. Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 14:11

2. What are some of the things or people we are to pray for?
 - a. Matthew 6:11

 - b. Matthew 6:12

 - c. Acts 8:22-24

 - d. I Timothy 2:1-4

 - e. II Thessalonians 3:1-2

 - f. Philemon 4, 22

 - g. Romans 15:30-31

 - h. James 1:5-8

 - i. I Thessalonians 1:2-3

 - j. Philippians 1:9-11

 - k. Romans 1:9-10

 - l. Colossians 4:2-3

 - m. Matthew 5:44

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LESSON NINE AND TEN: HOW TO PRAY

1. Prepare your mind for the task ahead! When you pray, you are approaching the throne of the Lord God Almighty.
2. Try not to focus immediately on your own wants and desires. Put these wants last, after humbling yourself. (Remember, anything God does for you is because He loves you and cherishes you as one of His children.) Try using the acronym ACTS:
 - A - Adoration, praising God and telling Him of your love for Him.
 - C - Confession of every sin and mistake. God already knows your sin.
 - T - Thanksgiving for all of the blessings He gave you.
 - S - Supplication, or asking all of your wants and desires.
3. Biblical examples of instruction:
 - a. Jesus's disciples came to Him with the request, "Lord, teach us to pray" in Luke 11:1.
 - 1) In verses 2-4 He gave them a model prayer.
 - 2) In Matthew 6:5-8, He gave them an admonition as what not to do:
 - a) Not to be seen of men.
 - b) Not using vain repetition. Explain "vain":
 - b. We are when to pray:
 - 1) I Thessalonians 5:17
 - 2) Ephesians 6:18
 - 3) Philippians 4:6-7
 - 4) Luke 18:1
 - c. What physical postures in prayer do we read about?
 - 1) Acts 20:36; 21:5
 - 2) Luke 18:9-14
 - 3) Matthew 26:39
 - 4) Ephesians 3:14
 - 5) John 17:1
 - 6) I Timothy 2:8

DISCUSSION:

1. What are some things we are not to do or interfere with our praying correctly or Biblically?
 - a. James 1:6-7
 - b. I Peter 3:7
 - c. James 4:3
 - d. Mark 11:25-26
 - e. Luke 18:9-14
 - f. Matthew 6:5-8
 - g. James 4:6-10
2. Look at the following texts and indicate the instructions on how to pray.
 - a. Luke 18:1-8
 - b. James 5:16
 - c. Romans 15:30
 - d. II Corinthians 1:11
 - e. I John 3:18-23
 - f. John 15:7
 - g. I John 5:14-15
 - h. John 14:13
 - i. John 15:16
 - j. John 16:23-24
 - k. Luke 22:42

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LESSONS ELEVEN AND TWELVE: DOES GOD ANSWER OUR PRAYERS TODAY?

GOD SAID "NO" MANY TIMES IN THE PAST:

1. The Bible is very explicit about how God answers our prayers. Sometimes He doesn't appear to answer our prayers; this is obviously His way of telling us "No." It's easy to get discouraged when we don't get what we pray for; this lesson will cover the specifics of how and why we get this answer.
2. As we begin, we need to notice that there are many seemingly "unanswered" prayers in the Bible, which is one way God said "No" in the past (and the only way He says "No" to us today):
 - a. Habakkuk 1:1-4,13

 - b. Psalms 22:2

 - c. Job 30:20
3. God also directly rejected individual petitions, as in these two examples:
 - a. Deuteronomy 3:23-28

 - b. II Corinthians 12:7-10
4. Lastly, many times God rejected petitions from entire groups on principal:
 - a. Isaiah 1:15

 - b. James 4:3

 - c. Job 27:8-9

 - d. Jeremiah 11:14

 - e. Psalms 66:18

 - f. Matthew 6:15

DISCUSSION:

1. After so many negative passages, let's turn to some passages that offer sweeping, explicit, and confident words about our prayers:
 - a. Jeremiah 33:3

 - b. Matthew 7:7

 - c. Matthew 21:22

 - d. Mark 11:24

2. In the first part of our lesson, we discussed how God says "No" to our prayers. One obvious reason for this answer is our ignorance:
 - a. Piety and godliness are no guarantee of wisdom:
 - 1) John Clark has stated that "Intelligence without goodness is sinful; goodness without intelligence is wasteful."
 - 2) C.S. Lewis has stated along the same line, "It's not enough to be a good egg. You've got to hatch out or go bad."
 - 3) What about scripture? Matthew 20:22-"Ye know not what ye ask."
 - a) We may only have partial knowledge about what we ask for.
 - b) Our outlook could be too narrow.
 - c) We may not have enough skill in tracing out the consequences of what we ask.

 - b. Many times we are lazy. We want God to give it to us, without using the abilities He blessed us with:
 - 1) God does answer our prayers; but He expects us to cooperate by doing all of the following:
 - a) Thinking
 - b) Working
 - c) Praying

 - 2) These three together are like fire. Fire needs oxygen, fuel, and heat to sustain itself. Take away any one, the fire goes out. Christians need to think, work, and pray. When a Christian ceases any of these, their fire goes out!
 - 3) How do we learn the scripture? By prayer or by study?

 - 4) How do we convert the lost? By thinking about it or by working?

 - 5) Question: A boy asks his father to do his arithmetic lesson so that he can go outside and play. Will the father do it?

6) Let's look at the example of Nehemiah:

a) Nehemiah 2:4-5

b) Nehemiah 4:9

c) Nehemiah 4:14

3. Let's look at the principles involved with why God says "No."

a. We are not really ready to receive the gift we desire.

1) We may lack real desire (Genesis 32:26)

2) We have not demonstrated persistence in our request (Luke 18:1-8)

3) When you pray, remember who you are making the request to before you ask. Consider these words:

"Easiness of desire is a great enemy to the success of a good man's prayer. It must be an intense, zealous, busy, operative prayer. For consider what a huge indecency it is that a man should speak to God for a thing he values not. Our prayers upbraid our spirits when we beg tamely for those things for which we ought to die."

Jeremy Taylor

b. Our prayer must be in the name of our advocate, Jesus Christ.

1) Likewise, our prayer must be in harmony with Christ's will.

2) John 15:7

c. Luke 22:42

d. Our prayers must come from a life that is persistent in its desires and unselfish in its purposes.

1) II Corinthians 12:7-10

2) Augustine said, "O Lord, grant that I may do Thy will as if it were my will; so that Thou mayest do my will as if it were Thy will."

4. Let's end the lesson on a positive note. God does answer prayers in by saying "Yes"; BUT ONLY WHEN IT SUITS HIS LONG-TERM PURPOSES!

a. I Samuel 1:10-20

b. II Samuel 12:15-23

c. Exodus 1:11-14;

d. Exodus 2:10; 3:1-10

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LESSON THIRTEEN: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRAYER

1. Someone once said, "Don't hold private prayer in public or public prayers in private." Any suggestions as to how this can be done?

2. Read Acts 20:20 and Acts 2:46. Do these passages help?

3. Let's notice a few examples to move us in the right direction:
 - a. II Chronicles 6:12-42

 - b. John 11:41-44

 - c. Acts 9:36-43

 - d. Acts 10:9

 - e. Acts 12:5, 12

 - f. Matthew 14:22, 23

4. Let's discuss public prayer:
 - a. I Corinthians 14:15-17

 - b. Matthew 6:5-8

 - c. I Corinthians 14:26,33,40

 - d. Looking at these passages, what kinds of public prayers are being led?

- e. What, then, should we pray for publicly?

 - f. Examine Matthew 18:15-17. Does it help clear up the distinction between the two?
5. Let's discuss private prayer:
- a. Matthew 6:5-8

 - b. We see in many passages (such as Daniel 6:10, Psalms 55:17, and Psalms 88:13) that the faithful set aside special times every day for prayer. What are your thoughts?

 - c. We also see special places set aside in Mark 1:35 and Matthew 6:6. What are your thoughts? Is this possible today?

 - d. Deuteronomy 6:7

 - e. Read Matthew 18:15-17, and describe the difference between individual prayers and private prayers
6. In conclusion, what's the difference between the two?
7. What things do we include in private prayers which would be out of place in public prayers?