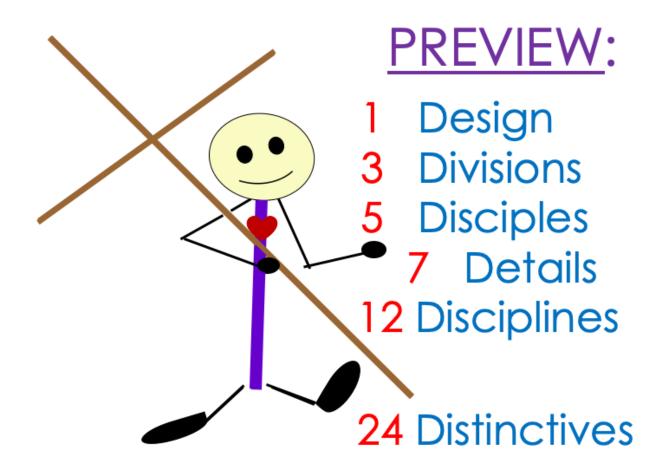


The FLOW Adult CURRICULUM

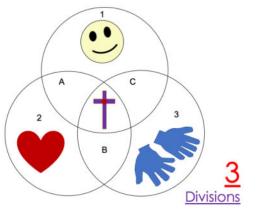
#23 Prayer 1st John 3:21-22

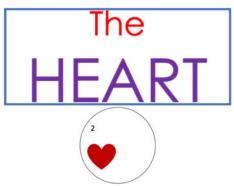
(Come And See Christianity book pages 72-73)

The FLOW



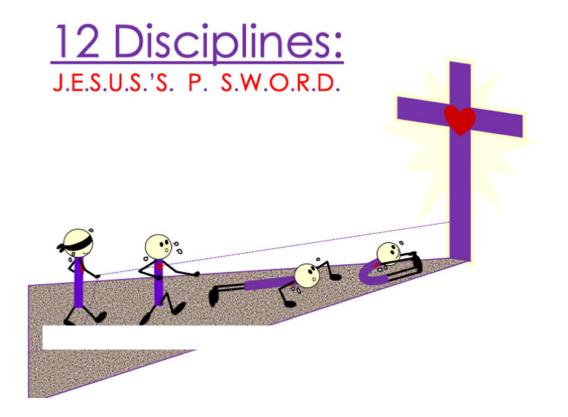
SECTION FIVE: 12 Disciplines







12 DISCIPLINES: Here are some heart exercises for you...
These discipleship "disciplines" can help Christians to strengthen their faith and grow as missional & maturing Christ-followers.





PRAYER:

AND, even more, reverently listening to Him... is the life-line of Christianity.

God's people need to hear from Him regularly thru both His Word & our prayers.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <u>17</u>so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

INTRO:

Welcome to another major transition point in your discipleship journey and our Come And See Christianity curriculum. By way of review, thus far, we have gone through Section One's single lesson on God's divine DESIGN, then Section Two's three unifying and introductory lessons on every human's 3 DIVISIONS (our HEAD, HEART, and HANDS); we then followed up with the universally inclusive definitions and descriptions of humanity's 5 types of people, also known as biblical DISCIPLES (the LOST, LOVER, LEARNER, LEADER, and LIFER), each having received their own lesson. Next came what we just completed, Section Four's 7 lessons on Christianity's fundamental, knowledge-based truths, also known as The DETAILS (FOUNDATIONS, FRAMEWORK, FACTS, FIGHT, FAITH, FAMILY, and FOREVER).

Now, in the same way that Sections 1-4 (and their 16 compiled lessons) all concentrated on aspects of "The HEAD" and the truth of God's Word, Section 5 will contain 12 complementary lessons (J.E.S.U.S.'S. P.S.W.O.R.D.) that focus on HEART exercises, also known as spiritual DISCIPLINES, that can help to grow and strengthen the Christian's truth-filled, loving, and faithfully obedient HEART...

12 HEART Strengthening DISCIPLINES:

- 1. Journaling
- 2. Eat-nothing (Fasting)
- 3. Scripture intake
- 4. Understudy of Scripture
- 5. Solitude
- 6. Stewardship
- 7. Prayer
- 8. Serving
- 9. Worship
- 10. Outreach
- 11. Relationships
- 12. **Development**

PRAYER:

LORD, we seek to bless You with all that is within us. Help us here, we pray, to be that blessing as we come to better understand You and Your eternal truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Help us to see with Your eyes and love with Your love, all that You would reveal to us through Your Word, Your will, and Your ways. May we grow in our grasp of Your realities, Your means of restoration, and Your mission of reproduction. In the holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen and Amen

CONTEXT:

Macro

Spiritual Disciplines

(The content herein is predominantly derived and expanded upon from Dr. Don Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines* & Dr. Chuck Lawless' *Discipled Warriors*.)

I. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES . . . FOR THE PURPOSE OF GODLINESS

Ours is an undisciplined age. The old disciplines are breaking down.
... We <u>need</u> the rugged strength of Christian <u>character</u>
that can come only from discipline.

- V. Raymond Edman

Discipline without direction is drudgery!

The Bible says of God's elect, "For those whom He foreknew He also predestined <u>to be conformed</u> to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29)

Although God will grant Christlikeness to us when Jesus returns, until then He intends for us to grow toward it.

We aren't merely to wait for holiness; we're to pursue it.

All who come to God trusting in the person and work of Jesus to make them right with God are given the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 1:13-14). The presence of the Holy Spirit causes all those in whom He resides to have new holy hungers they didn't have before.

Hebrews 12:14 is clear: <u>Anyone</u> who is not striving for holiness will not see the Lord!

The urgent question every Christian should ask is, "How then shall I pursue holiness... How can I become more like Christ?" God's Word offers a clear answer in...

<u>1 Timothy 4:7</u> "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness."

The only road to Christian maturity and godliness (a.k.a. Christlikeness & holiness) passes through the practice of the Spiritual Disciplines.

Godliness is the goal of the Disciplines... remember this and the **Spiritual <u>Disciplines become delights vs drudgery</u>.**

II. WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES?

Spiritual Disciplines are those practices found in Scripture (and in application) that promote spiritual growth among believers in The Gospel.

Spiritual Disciplines are the **habits of devotion** and **experiential Christianity** that have been **practiced** by the people of God since biblical times.

The Disciplines could be described in several ways:

- "First, the Bible prescribes both personal and interpersonal Spiritual Disciplines."
- Spiritual Disciplines are activities, NOT attitudes.
 - Disciplines are practices... NOT character qualities, graces, or "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23).
 - Disciplines are things you do!

The goal of practicing a given Discipline, is not about "DOing" as much as it is about "BEing," that is, BEing like Jesus. But the biblical way to grow in BEing more like Jesus is through the rightly motivated doing of the biblical Spiritual Disciplines.

- We do specific practices *sometimes* that cultivate being more like Jesus *all the time*.
- > Spiritual Disciplines are practices taught or modeled in the Bible. (Without this limitation, we might call anything we fancy a Spiritual Discipline.)
- > Spiritual Disciplines found in Scripture are sufficient for knowing & experiencing God & growing in Christlikeness.
 - o See 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - o See 2 Peter 1:3 & Philippians 4:13
- > Spiritual Disciplines are practices <u>derived</u> from the gospel, NOT <u>divorced</u> from the gospel.
- > Spiritual Disciplines are means, not ends.

Godliness is both closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ.

CAUTION: While we cannot be godly without the practice of the Disciplines, we can practice the Disciplines without being godly...

So, the Spiritual Disciplines are those personal and interpersonal activities given by God in the Bible as the sufficient means believers in Jesus Christ are to use in the Spirit-filled, gospel-driven pursuit of godliness, that is, closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ.

III. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES... AS MEANS TO GODLINESS

Godliness comes through discipline.

God uses three primary catalysts for changing us and conforming us into Christlikeness, but only one is largely under our control.

#1: God uses people to change people.

- "Iron sharpens iron," says Proverbs 27:17.
- Sometimes God uses our friends to sharpen us into more Christlike living, and sometimes He uses our enemies to file away our rough, ungodly edges.

#2: God uses circumstance(s) as His catalyst for change.

#3: God uses spiritual disciplines to change His people.

God uses spiritual disciplines to work on His people from the **inside out**.

Colossians 1:29 illustrates how **the efforts of a Christian & the work of God—can occur simultaneously** in a person indwelled by the Holy Spirit (cf. Philippians 2:13).

See here divine grace AND human responsibility...

As physical disciplines promote bodily strength, so the Spiritual Disciplines promote godliness.

Think of the Spiritual Disciplines as ways by which we can spiritually place ourselves in the path of God's grace and seek Him, much **like Zacchaeus** placed himself physically in Jesus' path and sought Him. The Lord, by His Spirit, still travels down certain paths that He has ordained and revealed in Scripture. We call these paths the Spiritual Disciplines...

If we will place ourselves on these paths and look for Him there by faith, we can expect to encounter Him.

IV. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES... GOD'S WILL FOR CHRISTIANS

"Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness" makes it plain that **this is a command of God**, not merely a suggestion.

- ➤ Holiness is not an option for those who claim to be children of the Holy One (see 1 Peter 1:15-16), so neither are the means of holiness—that is, the Spiritual Disciplines—an option.
- ➤ Jesus is the model of discipline in & for godliness.
- Many professing Christians are spiritually undisciplined and seem to have little Christlike fruit and power in their lives. Yet, many of them are remarkably disciplined in other areas of their lives.
- ➤ Too many Christians trivialize their effectiveness for the kingdom of God through a lack of discipline.
- ➤ The danger of neglecting the Spiritual Disciplines is the danger of bearing little spiritual fruit—your life counting little for the sake of the kingdom.

"I'm not afraid of failure. I'm afraid of succeeding at things that don't matter." - William Carey

"Freedom and discipline have come to be regarded as mutually exclusive, when in fact freedom is not at all the opposite, but rather the final reward, of discipline."

Elisabeth Elliot

If your picture of a disciplined Christian is one of a grim, tight-lipped, joyless half-robot, then you've missed the point.

By means of the Disciplines, let the truths of The Gospel restore your soul.

Micro

Biblical prayer is far more important and powerful than you may think.

When the devil sees a man or woman who really believes in prayer, who knows how to pray, and who really does pray, and, above all, when he sees a whole church on its face before God in prayer, he trembles as much as he ever did, for he knows that his day in that church or community is at an end.

- R.A. Torrey

In this lesson, the 23rd of 52 in our Come And See Christianity curriculum, PRAYER, our 6th of 12 Heart DISCIPLINES, is arguably the most difficult thus far to summarize. While **the challenge before us is beautiful**, it is nonetheless a challenge. Why? Answer: given the purpose, power, and promises of biblical PRAYER, we do not want to overly complicate the reader's understanding of PRAYER, while simultaneously striving to ensure that a human's ability to connect with Almighty God in personal dialogue is never reduced to anything less than jaw-dropping awe and immeasurable appreciation. In both definition and description, the LORD's loving gift of PRAYER is simple and sophisticated. Perhaps the most amazing thing of all, when it comes to understanding biblical PRAYER, is that Jesus Christ now sits at the right hand of the Father, praying for His Christian family. If you read Romans 8:34, 1 John 2:1, and Hebrews 7:25... **you will be beyond blessed!**

Message

God and His Word have much to say about the details of PRAYER. When we understand that the One true, living, and loving God of Christianity is a timeless, relational, trinitarian Creator, Helper, and Christ, we begin to recognize that biblical PRAYER is as central to God's divine DESIGN as is His love for His chosen children.

In short, with a true biblical perspective and healthy acknowledgment of creation's realities, to include humanity's desperate need for a Savior, one becomes properly postured to engage and embrace much of the DETAILS that envelop and explain biblical PRAYER.

To that end, The Gospel Coalition wrote an article highlighting some interesting insights and very telling statistics regarding the depth and scope of God's intentions when it comes to biblical PRAYER. Noting all that has been shared here and above, let us begin to press into our lesson by considering the Gospel Coalition's intriguing questions, eye-opening answers, and helpful observations.

"Do you know how many prayers are mentioned in the Bible (and how many were answered)?" Here's the answer to that question and other things you should know about prayer in the Bible.

- 1. There are 650 prayers listed in the Bible.
- 2. There are approximately 450 recorded answers to prayer in the Bible.
- 3. The first time prayer is mentioned in the Bible is <u>Genesis 4:26</u> (earlier dialogues were initiated directly by God, e.g., Genesis 3:8-13, Genesis 4:9).
- 4. The Bible records Jesus praying 25 different times during his earthly ministry.
- 5. In the Bible, <u>Paul mentions prayer</u> (prayers, prayer reports, prayer requests, exhortations to pray) 41 times.
- 6. Although prayer can (and should) be done from any bodily position, the Bible lists five specific postures: sitting (2 Sam 7:18), standing (Mark 11:25), kneeling (Chronicles 6:13; Daniel 6:10; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60, 9:40, 20:36, 21:5; Ephesians 3:14), with one's face to the ground (Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:35), and with hands lifted up (1 Timothy 2:8).

7. In Jesus' model for how his disciples should pray (<u>Luke 11:1-4</u>), he provides five areas of focus: That God's name be honored – the focus on his everlasting glory ("Father, hallowed be your name"); that God's kingdom come – the focus on his eternal will ("your kingdom come"); that God's provision is given – the focus on our present ("Give us each day our daily bread."); that God's forgiveness is granted – the focus on our past (Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.); that God's deliverance will be provided – the focus on our future.

8. The Bible lists at least <u>nine main types of prayer</u>: prayer of faith (<u>James 5:15</u>), prayer of agreement (also known as corporate prayer) (<u>Acts 2:42</u>), prayer of request (also known as petition or supplication) (<u>Philippians 4:6</u>), prayer of thanksgiving (<u>Psalm 95:2-3</u>), prayer of worship (<u>Acts 13:2-3</u>), prayer of consecration (also known as dedication) (<u>Matthew 26:39</u>), prayer of intercession (<u>1 Timothy 2:1</u>), prayer of imprecation (<u>Psalm 69</u>), and praying in the Spirit (<u>1 Corinthians 14:14-15</u>).

9. The word "Amen" (which means "let it be, "so be it," "verily," "truly") makes its first appearance in the Bible in <u>Numbers 5:22</u>. In that passage, God commands it to be said by a person who is yielding to his examination.

"Prayer lays hold of God's plan and becomes the link between His will and its accomplishment on earth."
- Elisabeth Elliot

BIG IDEA:

Reverently talking with and listening to God is the lifeline of Christianity. God's people need to hear from Him regularly through His Word and their prayers.

"God shapes the world by prayer."
- E.M. Bounds

PREVIEW:

- 1. What Is Prayer?
- 2. Obedient Prayer
- 3. Prayer Helps

TEXT:

1 John 3:21-22

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; <u>22</u>and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him.

1. What Is Prayer?

Illustration:

"Any concern too small to be turned into a prayer is too small to be considered a burden."

- Corrie Ten Boom

If we shrink our definition of PRAYER down to a size that is smaller than God's Word on PRAYER, that would literally be dis-grace-full. On the other hand, if we complicate our description beyond one's ability to recognize God's divine fingerprints-on and blueprint-for PRAYER, that would be a grace-shrinking mistake. Having said that, John Piper's definition ("Prayer is the intentional conveying of a message to God."), which he supports with the supernatural context and Holy Spirit empowered description found in Romans 8:26 ("Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."), is a helpful start to understanding biblical PRAYER.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
- Philippians 4:6

God warms His hands at man's heart when he prays.
- John Masefield

Explanation:

What is prayer?

The most basic definition of prayer is "talking to God." Prayer is not meditation or passive reflection; it is direct address to God. It is the communication of the human soul with the Lord who created the soul. Prayer is the primary way for the believer in Jesus Christ to communicate his emotions and desires with God and to fellowship with God.

Prayer can be audible or silent, private or public, formal or informal. All prayer must be offered in faith (<u>James 1:6</u>), in the name of the Lord Jesus (<u>John 16:23</u>), and in the power of the Holy Spirit (<u>Romans 8:26</u>). As the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia puts it, "Christian prayer in its full New Testament meaning is prayer addressed to God as Father, in the name of Christ as Mediator, and through the enabling grace of the indwelling Spirit" ("Prayer" by J. C. Lambert). The wicked have no desire to pray (<u>Psalm 10:4</u>), but the children of God have a natural desire to pray (<u>Luke 11:1</u>).

Prayer is described in the Bible as seeking God's favor (<u>Exodus 32:11</u>), pouring out one's soul to the Lord (<u>1 Samuel 1:15</u>), crying out to heaven (<u>2 Chronicles 32:20</u>), drawing near to God (<u>Psalm 73:28, KJV</u>), and kneeling before the Father (<u>Ephesians 3:14</u>).

Paul wrote, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6–7). Worry about nothing; pray about everything.

Everything? Yes, God wants us to talk with Him about everything. How often should we pray? The biblical answer is "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We should keep a running conversation going with God all day long. Some find the ACTS formula of prayer helpful, but there is really no special formula for how to pray in the Bible. We should just do it. We can pray under any and all circumstances. Prayer develops our relationship with God and demonstrates our trust and utter dependence upon Him.

Prayer is the Christian's way of communicating with God. We pray to praise God and thank Him and tell Him how much we love Him. We pray to enjoy His presence and tell Him what is going on in our lives. We pray to make requests and seek guidance and ask for wisdom. God loves this exchange with His children, just as we love the exchange we have with our children. Fellowship with God is the heart of prayer. Too often we lose sight of how simple prayer is really supposed to be.

When we make petitions to God, we let God know exactly where we stand and what we would like to see happen. In our prayers, we must admit that God is greater than we are and ultimately knows what is best in any given situation (Romans 11:33–36). God is good and asks us to trust Him. In prayer, we say, essentially, "Not my will, but your will be done." The key to answered prayer is praying according to the will of God and in accordance with His Word. Prayer is not seeking our own will but seeking to align ourselves with the will of God more fully (1 John 5:14–15; James 4:3).

The Bible contains many examples of prayer and plenty of exhortations to pray (see <u>Luke 18:1</u>; <u>Romans 12:12</u>; and <u>Ephesians 6:18</u>). God's house is to be a house of prayer (<u>Mark 11:17</u>), and God's people are to be people of prayer: "Dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love" (<u>Jude 1:20–21</u>). **GotQuestions.org**

Application:

O, let the place of secret prayer become to me the most beloved spot on earth. - Andrew Murray

2. Obedient Prayer

Illustration:

Prayer is the nearest approach to God and the highest enjoyment of Him that we are capable of in this life.
- William Law

Explanation:

Our text (1 John 3:21-22) expresses both a promise and an explanation regarding obedience and disobedience in PRAYER. If our hearts do not condemn us and we live pleasing God, His guarantees are ours! Amen and AMEN. Now, think about that truth from the opposite side... Remembering what Jesus said was the greatest command ("Love the LORD your God with ALL your heart, soul, mind, and strength.") is arguably never more important than when we go to pray. If we are not loving the LORD biblically, we are not praying obediently, which means that our hearts are condemning us, which means our prayers are not likely to be answered.

Application:

Contemplate and take to heart these 7 barriers to PRAYER. Why? Because, sadly, often times, people are quick to go through the motions of mechanically praying, all the while forgetting that from God's perspective, the process of PRAYER, which should be rooted in truth, always begins in the heart.

To be clear and direct, each of the 7 barriers represents disobedience and **disobedient prayers are sickly prayers void of promise and power.** Thus, any honest hope of having one's prayers divinely affirmed and constructively answered calls for genuine confession and heart-felt repentance before a holy God.

Check your heart and prayers for these destructive barriers:

1.	Wrong and selfish motives	James 4:3
2.	Hidden sin in your life	Isaiah 59:2
3.	Biblical idolatry of any kind	Judges 10:14
4.	Hard-heartedness	Proverbs 28:9
5.	Unforgiveness	Matthew 6:9-13
6.	Unhealthy relationships	1 Peter 3:7
7.	Unbelief in all its forms	James 1:6-8

3. Prayer Helps

Illustration:

Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of the night.
- George Herbert

Explanation:

As noted in our Micro introduction, PRAYER is perhaps the most challenging of all the Come And See Christianity lessons to summarize. In reality, a lifetime could be spent digging deeper and deeper into the treasure trove of PRAYER. When one comes to understand what it means to share supernatural fellowship with Christ and ever-present access to the living God, in personal, one on One communication... awe-struck humility, coupled with faithful obedience and eternal gratitude, will begin to ooze out of the person praying.

With that said, in an effort to support the reader who hopes to reach that loving and oozing place described above, the following insights offer a handful of helps.

NOTE: each of the 9 outlined points below has a full, corresponding teaching waiting for you in the "PRAYER" sermon series that can be accessed through HISbridge.com.

- A. Revisit the 7 Barriers To PRAYER.
- B. 7 Reasons To Pray
 - 1. Pray to obey. (1 Thessalonians 5:17 & Ephesians 6:18)
 - 2. Pray to BE Christlike. (Mark 1:25; Luke 6:12; Romans 8:34)
 - 3. Pray to BE biblical. (Acts 2:42 and Acts 6:4)
 - 4. Pray to receive...
- a. The Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13)
- b. God's mercy and grace (Hebrews 4:16)
- c. Joy (John 16:24)
- d. Desires of your heart (1 John 3:21-22)
- 5. Pray to get ready (Luke 21:34-36)
- 6. Pray to fight! (1 Peter 5:8 & Ephesians 6:12)
- 7. Pray to win! (Psalms 51:2; 119:18; 139:23-24; 2 Corinthians 3:18)
- C. BE sure to KNOW The God to whom you pray! Beware the trappings of:

1.	"No God" prayers.	0
2.	"One wrong god" prayers.	1
3.	"Many false gods" prayers.	11111
4.	"Jesus minus" prayers.	† -
5.	"Jesus plus" prayers.	† +
6.	"Jesus plus/minus" prayers.	† +/-
7.	"Unrecognizable Jesus" prayers.	?†?

- D. Appreciation and PRAYER should be inseparable.
- E. Pray, Obey, and Please God are 3 keys to the Christian life.
- F. Remember why we pray joyously in Jesus' name.
- G. Offensive PRAYER is another essential for all discipled warriors.
- H. Study with Christ how we come to Yahweh Thru Yeshua.
- I. Intercessory PRAYER is one of the most Christlike things we can do!

Much of modern prayer has no power in it because it has no heart in it.

- R.A. Torrey

If we go to God with half-hearted prayers... why would we expect Him to come back with full-hearted answers?

Nothing tends more to cement the hearts of Christians than praying together.

Never do they love one another so well as when they witness
the outpouring of each other's hearts in prayer.

- Charles Finney

Application:

<u>Iames 1:5</u>

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

The greatest tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer. - F.B. Meyer

Listening to God's voice is the secret of the assurance that He will listen to mine.

Andrew Murrey

CLOSF:

If ever there were an end that felt more like a beginning, this is it.

To be sure, we have only begun to scratch the surface of all that the LORD has offered His people through the gift and practice of PRAYER. Still, we have introduced the importance and power of biblical PRAYER, offering helpful definitions, constructive standards, and essential insights - all by God's grace and all for His glory. **Press into prayer!** Take the deeper dive into the additional teaching that is waiting for you in the PRAYER sermon series. Time invested there will inform, inspect, and inspire you, all the while helping and equipping you to spend more productive and progressive time in God's Word and in powerful, God-honoring prayer.

For What?

Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?

- Corrie Ten Boom

The best and sweetest flowers of paradise God gives to His people when they are upon their knees. **Prayer is the gate of heaven.**

- Thomas Brooks

Time spent in prayer is never wasted.
- François Fenelon

When I pray, coincidences happen, and when I don't, they don't.
- William Temple

God's way of answering the Christian's prayer for more patience, experience, hope, and love often is to put him into the furnace of affliction.

- Richard Cecil

So What?

To desire revival...while at the same time denying personal prayer and devotion, is to wish one way and walk in another."

A.W. Tozer

There is nothing that makes us love a man so much as praying for him.
- William Law

Fervent prayers produce phenomenal results.
- Woodrow Kroll

The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.
- Proverbs 15:29

If your day is helmed in with prayer... it is less likely to come unraveled.
- Cynthia Lewis

To get nations back on their feet, we must get down on our leaves.
- Billy Graham

Now What?

It is possible to move men, through God, by prayer alone.
- Hudson Taylor

1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

"Work as if you were to live a hundred years, pray as if you were to die tomorrow.
- Benjamin Franklin

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, thank You so much for the Truth and Love of Your Word, will, and ways. Please help us to absorb and apply ALL that You have shared and commanded in the Bible. May our heads be infilled with Your defining Scriptures, for the express purpose of informing, inspecting, and inspiring our sanctified hearts and serving hands.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen and Amen

Support Sermon: "Pray, Obey, & Please"

1 John 3:21-22 November 29, 2009 Sermon Series: Prayer