



STUDY GUIDE

August 3
-
September 7



Praying with Paul

PRAYING WITH PAUL

A STUDY

on the Prayers in the Pauline Epistles:

August 3 - September 7

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Beijing, China

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Written by TJ Johnson

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Sermon Series Overview

The Reformer, Martin Luther once wrote, “As it is the business of tailors to make clothes, and the business of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray!” Luther is able to say this with such confidence because from Genesis to Revelation, we find that God’s people are praying people. The Bible opens with prayer (Gen. 4). The Bible ends (Rev. 21) with prayer. Right in the middle of the Bible is an entire book of Prayer (Psalms). To be a Christian is to be a person of prayer. And yet, in the life of a Christian today, prayer too often seems mysterious, boring, or unhelpful, and therefore it is neglected.

Therefore, over the next six weeks we will seek to deepen our prayer life by focusing on prayers modeled by the Apostle Paul. This series hopes to accomplish two things.

First, it hopes to encourage us to pray. At City Church we take prayer seriously. This is why we have a prayer team for congregational gatherings, why we take time each month to pray for the nations, why our gatherings are interspersed with prayer (not as a transition, but as a way to commune with the Living God who comes to meet with us). This is also why we have a Tuesday and Sunday night prayer meeting. So, let us pray at home, pray at work, pray on the subway, pray at church, pray when you wake up, pray when you go to sleep, pray...as Paul writes...without ceasing.

Secondly, we hope to encourage one another to pray the right TYPES of prayers. Far too often WHEN we pray, we pray with wrong motives and wrong theology. Studying the prayers of Paul will give us a framework for theologically sound, God honoring, Christ exalting, Spirit-led prayers. One of the shocking things one will discover by studying Paul’s prayer is how little time he spent praying for temporal needs and how much time he spent praying for spiritual formation. Which is most likely the exact opposite of the average Christian prayer life.

As DA Carson points out, “Judging by Paul’s praying, it should be clear that our chief concern in petition must not be that we might become successful, wealthy, popular, healthy, brilliant, triumphant, happy, or beautiful. Still less does Paul encourage us to pray that all our problems will disappear. Paul prays with eternity’s values in view. He knows we are going to have to give an account of what we have done.”

Sermon Series Overview

The vision of City Church this year is to be a church that abides in Christ through the spiritual disciplines. Prayer is one of those disciplines where we meet with Christ. Therefore, let us not just learn about how to pray, let us be a church that prays...without ceasing.

Praying with you,

Pastor TJ

Sermon Series Calendar

August 3:	Barriers to Prayer	1 John 5:14-15
August 10:	Salvation	1 Timothy 2:1-7
August 17:	Satisfaction in Christ	2 Corinthians 12:7-10
August 24:	Sanctification	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
August 31:	Love for God	Ephesians 3:14-21
September 7:	Love of Others	1 Thessalonians 3:6-13



STUDY GUIDE

August 3



BARRIERS TO PRAYER



Title: *Barriers to Prayer*

Text: *1 John 5:14-15*

Proposition: *Prayer is powerful and effective, but only if done the right way, therefore let us examine ourselves to ensure that we are praying rightly.*

This Sunday, before we get into the prayers of Paul to learn the right ways to pray, we will first look at many of the WRONG ways we pray. Come ready to take notes and seriously reflect on your current prayer life. And then be ready, with the Lord's help, to make the proper changes to your prayer life, for God's glory and the church's good.

In Him,

TJ Johnson



Sermon Outline

Title: Barriers to Prayer

Text: 1 John 5:14-15

Prop: Prayer is powerful and effective, but only if done the right way, therefore let us examine ourselves to ensure that we are praying rightly.

Sometimes our prayers are not answered because of:

1. Unconfessed Sin – 1 John 3:21-22
2. Unreconciled Relationships - 1 Peter 3:7-9
3. Unworthy Motives – James 4:3
4. Unbelief – James 1:6-7
5. Unaligned Wills – 1 John 5:14-15
6. Unpersistent Prayer – Luke 11:5-9
7. Underdeveloped Faith – 2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Sermon Notes



Discussion Questions

1. 1 John 3:21-22, Isaiah 59:2, Psalm 66:18, 1 Peter 4:7.

Why (and in what ways) does unconfessed sin hinder our prayer life and what strategies do you have for regular rhythms of confession?

2. 1 Peter 3:7-9, Matthew 5:23-24, Isaiah 1:15-17.

What are the Biblical steps to reconciliation? Who in your life do you need to forgive or seek forgiveness from and how can this group support you in prayer or practical steps this month?

3. James 4:3.

Give some examples of selfish motives in prayer and discuss how we can ensure we pray with right motives (the sermon discusses three possible motives, me-centered, man-centered, Christ-centered).

4. James 1:6-7, Matthew 21:22.

Give examples of praying in faith vs praying without faith then discuss how God increases our faith.

5. 1 John 5:14-15, Romans 8:26-27, Matthew 6:10, 26:39, James 4:13-15, 2 Corinthians 1:20.

What are some examples of misinterpreting and misapplying scripture that results in claiming “promises” that God never made? What are other ways people trust in false “promises” from God? How do we pray when we don’t know God’s will in a certain situation?



Discussion Questions

6. Luke 11:5-9, Luke 18:1-6.

Give some examples when God answered persistent prayer. How do we know when to keep praying persistently (like the widow in Luke 18) and when to stop praying (like Paul in 2 Corinthians 12)? What are some reasons why God might not immediately answer our prayers?

7. 2 Corinthians 12:8-9, Job 6:8-9, John 11.

Share a time when you (or someone you know) prayed for something that God did not grant only later to find that God's ways were better.

8. Various

What else would you add to the list of barriers to answered prayer?



Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



STUDY GUIDE

August 10



EVANGELISTIC PRAYER



Title: *Evangelistic Prayer*

Text: *1 Timothy 2:1-7*

Proposition: *Because God is worthy of global worship, a part of our regular prayer life should be intentional intercession for the lost.*

This Sunday, as we look at Paul's teaching on prayer found in 1 Timothy 2:1-7, we will explore the power of evangelistic prayer.

Here are a few examples of how Paul prayed (or asked for) evangelistic prayers: **Romans 10:1** - Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. **Colossians 4:3-4** - Pray for us... that God may open a door for our message... so that we may proclaim Christ clearly. **Acts 26:29** - I pray to God that not only you (King Agrippa) but all who are listening to me today may become what I am. **2 Thessalonians 3:1** - Pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. **Ephesians 6:19-20** - Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel... that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

If salvation is God's work, then prayer must be the church's primary weapon in evangelism! As one person once said, effective evangelism is first talking to God about our neighbors before talking to our neighbors about God. This Sunday come ready to see how evangelistic prayer fuels global missions, transforms relationships, and empowers gospel witness.

Praying Evangelistically with You,


Pastor TJ



Sermon Outline

Title: Evangelistic Prayer

Text: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Prop: Because God is worthy of global worship, a part of our regular prayer life should be intentional intercession for the lost.

Three Ways to Pray Evangelistic Prayers:

1. Pray for Peoples (Nations).
2. Pray for People (Neighbors).
3. Pray for Proclaimers

Sermon Notes



Discussion Questions

1. **Read 1 Timothy 2:1-7.** What biblical truths motivate us to pray for the lost?
2. **Read Psalm 2:8.** What specific ways we can strategically pray for God's global mission (to redeem people from every tongue and tribe) to be fulfilled?
3. **Read Romans 10:1.** Has God given you a burden for a particular people group? If so, share a bit about them with the group. If not, as a group suggest a few nations/people groups to consider adopting.
4. **Read 2 Corinthians 10:13-16.** Who are your 3-5 closest non-Christian relationships? How can we specifically pray for each?
5. **Read Matthew 9:37-38.** Share with the group missionaries that you regularly pray for and the specific ways you pray for them.
6. What practical ways can we pray for each other to be bold, wise witnesses in our daily lives?

Challenge:

- Download the Operation World app. Share one surprising fact you learned this week about a country's spiritual needs.
- As a group, pick one unreached people group to pray over for the next month.



Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



STUDY GUIDE

August 17



PRAYS IN HARD TIMES



Title: ***Prayers in Hard Times***

Text: ***2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5, 16-18***

Proposition: *When God's people face suffering, our prayers must go beyond begging for relief—we must boldly ask the Lord to calm them with His peace (2 Thess. 3:16), strengthen them with His comfort (2 Thess 2:17), and eternally hold them with His hope (2 Thess 2:16).*

This week, we continue our series on prayer by studying how the Apostle Paul prayed for Christians enduring suffering—whether from sickness, persecution, economic hardship, or other trials. What we'll discover is striking: Paul didn't merely ask God to remove their hardships. Instead, he prayed that Christ Himself would be present with them in their struggles, and that through His presence, they would find peace to guard their hearts, comfort to strengthen their faith, and hope to anchor their souls.

To prepare for our gathered assembly this Lord's Day, I encourage you to read our key texts:

- 2 Corinthians 12:1–10
- 2 Thessalonians 2:13–3:5, 16–18

Interceding with You,


Pastor TJ



Sermon Outline

Title: Prayers in Hard Times

Text: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5, 16-18

Prop: When God's people face suffering, our prayers must go beyond begging for relief—we must boldly ask the Lord to calm them with His peace (2 Thess. 3:16), strengthen them with His comfort (2 Thess 2:17), and eternally hold them with His hope (2 Thess 2:16).

In hard times:

1. Pray for God's Peace. 2 Thess. 3:16
2. Pray for God's Comfort. 2 Thessalonians 2:17
3. Pray for God's Hope. 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:3
4. Pray for God's People (to be present) 1 Thessalonians 3:10–11

Sermon Notes



Discussion Questions

1. **What hardships** did the recipients of the Pauline Epistles face, what hardships is our community currently experiencing, and what dangers do hardships pose to our faith?

2. **Read 2 Thessalonians 3:16.** How does the Bible define God's peace? When you pray for God's peace, what are you asking God to give, what are you asking Him to remove or protect from? Who in our community needs God's peace right now?

Bonus: What are some ways God gives us peace?

3. **Read 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17.** How does the Bible define God's comfort (In what ways do we often misunderstand Biblical comfort)? When you pray for God's comfort, what are you asking God to give, what are you asking Him to remove or protect from? Who in our community needs God's comfort right now?

Bonus: What are some ways God gives us comfort?

4. **Read 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:3.** How does the Bible define God's hope (In what ways do we often misunderstand Biblical comfort)? When you pray for God's hope, what are you asking God to give, what are you asking Him to remove or protect from? Who in our community needs God's hope right now?

Bonus: What are some ways God gives us hope?

5. **Read 1 Thessalonians 3:10-11; Romans 1:9-13.** Why might Christians today be quick to pray for a friend in need, but hesitant to be the answer to that prayer through personal action? Think about the people you've discussed who need God's peace, comfort, and hope right now; what are specific, practical ways your group can actively 'be the Church' to them this week?



Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports