



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

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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



STUDY GUIDE

August 24

PRAYING FOR SANCTIFICATION





Title: *Prayers for Sanctification*

Text: *1 Thessalonians 5:16-28*

Proposition: *God's will for all Christians is that they would be sanctified, therefore we must regularly pray for ours and other's sanctification.*

I hope you have been faithfully praying each week for the salvation of others and for those in our community enduring hardships—that they may experience God's peace, comfort, and hope.

As we continue our series on prayer, we will incorporate a third type of prayer into our intercession: prayers for sanctification. First Thessalonians reminds us that God's will for us is our sanctification. In fact, Paul later prays for God to completely sanctify the Thessalonian community.

Praying fervently for a fellow believer—that God would shape their thoughts, words, and actions to be more like Christ's—is one of the most powerful gifts we can offer. In preparation for our time together this Sunday, please read through 1 Thessalonians, focusing on 5:16-28.

Praying with You,


Pastor TJ



Sermon Outline

Title: Prayers for Sanctification

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-28

Prop: God's will for all Christians is that they would be sanctified, therefore we must regularly pray for ours and other's sanctification.

Let us pray for:

1. Complete Sanctification. 1 Thessalonians 5:23a
2. Completion of Sanctification. 1 Thessalonians 5:23b
3. Means of Sanctification. 1 Thessalonians 5:24

Sermon Notes



Discussion Questions

1. **Define** the biblical concept of sanctification (include key differences between the believer's positional, progressive, and ultimate sanctification and why each is important).
2. **How** do you interpret the meaning of 'sanctify you completely' in 1 Thess. 5:23, and how can we pray for this complete sanctification in the lives of others?
3. **Based** on 1 Thessalonians 5:23, what does it look like to pray for a fellow believer's 'whole spirit, soul, and body to be kept blameless' until Christ's return?
4. **Share** some examples of people who started following Christ and later fell away. What role does prayer have in ensuring others are found "blameless" at the final judgment?
5. **According** to the Bible what are the means by which God sanctifies a person?
6. **Share** an example of how you have seen God's sanctifying work in your own life. What areas are you desiring greater sanctification in?

Going Deeper:

1. **Does** Paul's phrasing of 'spirit, soul, and body' suggest a trichotomist view of human nature, or can it be understood within a dichotomist framework?
2. **Compare** and contrast the Wesleyan, Keswick, Reformed, and Chaferian (Dispensational) views of sanctification. Which perspective do you find most biblically compelling
3. **In** the process of our sanctification, what is God's role and what is our responsibility? How do these two work together without compromising God's sovereignty or human responsibility? (see Phil 2:12-13)



Prayer & Praise

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Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



STUDY GUIDE

August 31



PRAYING FOR LOVE FOR GOD



Title: Love for God

Text: Ephesians 3:14-21

Proposition: *Because love is at the very core of our faith, one of the most important things that we can pray for is an increase of the love for God in our hearts by growing in our knowledge of His love for us and our desire to abide in Him.*

As we continue our series on prayer, this week we will look at another of the most important things we can pray for: an increase in our love for God.

Love is at the very center of our faith. 1 John 4:8 tells us that “anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” Jesus told us in Matthew 22 that the first and greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

This week we will look at Paul’s letter to the Ephesians and discuss why it is important to love God, what it means to love God, and how to grow in our capacity to love God.

Here’s a hint: it all centers around God’s amazing love for us, made manifest through Christ.

Praying with you,

Pastor Ben



Sermon Outline

Title: Love for God

Text: Ephesians 3:14-21

Proposition: Because love is at the very core of our faith, one of the most important things that we can pray for is an increase of the love for God in our hearts by growing in our knowledge of His love for us and our desire to abide in Him.

A.) Why should we love God?

- 1. Love is at the core of our faith.
- 2. The first and greatest command is to love the Lord.

B.) What does it mean to love God?

- 1. If we love Him we will obey Him.
- 2. We also cultivate our affections for Him.

C.) Pray to know the love of God.

- 1. We love Him because He loved us first.
- 2. His love has been demonstrated on the cross.
- 3. We need the Holy Spirit to strengthen us to know and believe God's love
- 4. God's love is limitless - we can never stop growing in our knowledge of His love.

D.) Pray for an increased capacity to love God.

- 1. Pray against other lovers (idols).
- 2. Pray for an awareness of how much we've been forgiven.
- 3. Pray for an increased desire to spend focused time with the Lord.
- 4. Pray that we would love God with our heart (will), soul (core of our life), mind (intellect) and strength (actions).



Discussion Questions

1. **How** does our culture use the word “love” in different ways than the Bible uses love?
2. **Why** is God worthy of our love?
3. **What** are some right and wrong expressions of love toward God?
4. **How** does the Bible describe God’s love for us, and how does grasping this truth grow our love for Him?
5. **What** specific practice, habit, or experience has God used to grow your love for Him?
6. **What** are some things that compete for your love for God and how do you fight against this type of idolatry?
7. **How** might one use Matthew 22:37-38 as a template for intercessory 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

Sept 7



PRAYING FOR LOVE FOR OTHERS



Title: Love for Others

Text: 1 Thessalonians 3:6-4:11

Prop: A Christian is known by their love, therefore we must pray that our love for others would increase.

This week we end our series on prayer by modeling Paul's prayer found in 1 Thessalonians 3:12, May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all. In a world filled with hate, let the church be a bastion of love. In a world filled with distorted ideas of love, let the church hold fast to Biblical love, even when unpopular. May your prayers be a powerful tool to help others "increase and abound in love"—for God's glory and the good of the world.

Praying with you,

Pastor TJ



Sermon Outline

Title: Love for Others

Text: 1 Thessalonians 3:6-4:11

Prop: A Christian is known by their love, therefore we must pray that our love for others would increase.

1. Increasing Love. 1 Thess. 3:12a

2. Comprehensive Love. 1 Thess. 3:12b

3. Conflict-Destroying Love. 1 Thess. 3:13, 4:6

4. Christ-Honoring Love. 1 Thess. 4:1



Discussion Questions

1. **Share** a time when your love for someone “increased and abounded”. Is there anyone in your life that you need God’s grace to increase your love for? Explain.
2. **What** is Ordo Amoris and how might one use it to structure their prayers for others?
3. **What** types of conflicts are easiest to arise in our community and how does prayer help us love in the midst of conflict?
4. **Where** is the line between showing Christ-like love and compromising biblical truth? Can you think of a situation where choosing to love biblically might actually be called "unloving" by the world's standards?



Prayer & Praise

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