

## LEADER'S GUIDE

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# Prayer Basics

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**If you have not already done so, it is important that you first review our [Leader's Packet](#) for specifics on how to open, facilitate, and close your group sessions.**

This Leader's Guide walks you step by step through this lesson. Use as much of the suggested material as you find helpful. Some sections have more than one discussion question or idea so you can choose an option that fits your group. Feel free to add other ideas as well. You may also choose to extend this particular lesson to two or more sessions.

The Leader's Guide contains information not covered in the Listening Guide, so the group session adds value to those who have completed the Listening Guide.

## Step by Step Through the Study

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As you prepare for the session, you will find information you need to lead the discussion questions in this Leader's Guide.

## Why Pray?

### Introduce the Lesson

**Introduce the lesson** by reading or paraphrasing the following overview of Lesson 1: “The scriptural basis for prayer is not legalistic or ritualistic. It is both deeply relational and immensely practical. This lesson delves into an understanding of prayer as both a privilege and a blessing, and underscores the necessity of a consistent practice of prayer for a vital and growing Christian life.”

*Ask if anyone has questions about the lesson or about the preparation for the lesson.*

### Review the Lesson Objectives

**Review the Lesson Objectives** below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand scriptural foundations for why the practice of prayer is vital to a relationship with God.
- Comprehend what God’s desire for prayer and Jesus’ practice of prayer show us about God’s personality.
- Ascertain some of the exciting incentives God gives us for praying in Scripture.

While we provide comprehensive **lesson** goals, it is important that your group members also reflect on their own **personal** goals. Even if they choose to elaborate on one of the lesson goals that you provide, it helps to have their own reason for studying the lesson. The group will also have time to reflect on these personal goals at the end of the lesson to see how they have or have not been fulfilled, or perhaps have changed.

*After you have explained the two levels of lesson goals, ask if anyone would like to share their personal goal for the lesson in a sentence.*

### Introduction

Open in prayer.

Ask what kinds of experience the group members have had with prayer. This exercise is designed to warm them up to talking about their relationship to the topic and to give you a sense of how

familiar various ones are with it.

- *Why do you think prayer is important?*
- *Do you feel comfortable talking to God? Do you feel comfortable praying out loud with others?*
- *Do you have a regular time of prayer each day?*
- *Can you tell of an occasion when you felt very connected to God during prayer? How was that different from other times of prayer?*
- *How would you like to grow in your prayer life as a result of this class?*

## Review & Discuss

*Ask for answers to the following questions (taken from the Listening Guide):*

Read or have others read Psalm 116 and Jeremiah 33:1–3.

[1] Why can prayer be an action that is more powerful than we could possibly realize?

- *Why does James believe that God intended prayer to be an adventure?*
- *Have you ever thought about it like that? Why or why not?*
- *How can you “love others” through your prayers?*

[2] Why is seeking God’s face when we pray more than simply asking for things?

- *Read or have others read Jeremiah 33:3, Psalm 27:8, and 1 Chronicles 16:11.*
- *Open a brief discussion on what it means to “seek God’s face.”*
- *What are some attributes of God that we can adore Him for?*

[3] Why is prayer not listed among any of the spiritual gifts in Scripture?

- *Read Romans 12:6–8 and 1 Corinthians 12:28.*
- *Why do you think “prayer” is not listed as a spiritual gift in either of these passages?*
- *What is more unique about prayer than some of the spiritual gifts?*

[4] What does David tell us God does when we pray?

- *Read Psalm 116:1–2.*
- *What is your reaction to that picture of God’s response to your prayers?*

[5] If God’s Word promises that God rewards those who earnestly seek Him, what will happen if we do not pray?

- *Read Hebrews 11:6.*
- *Discuss what we might be forfeiting by not praying?*

[6] Why did God tell Hezekiah He would help him survive the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians?

- *If you have time and an engaged group, read Isaiah 36 and 37. If not, summarize Isaiah 36 and read Isaiah 37:9–36.*
- *The first time Sennacherib's servant came to threaten Judah, what did Hezekiah do?*
- *The second time the messenger came from Assyria, what did Hezekiah do then? What did God say as a result of that?*

[7] Why is God Himself the best answer to prayer when answers don't seem to come?

- *Discuss how we often think of prayer as getting something from God.*

## Reflection

It is important to promote this reflection time in each lesson of the course. Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of prayer. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes.

Also emphasize that this part of the group session could be an important time for participants to minister to other members of the group. Not everyone “sees” the same emphases, and something one person highlights may be an added insight to others in the group.

Ask the members to explain how their view of prayer has changed since studying this lesson.

## Close in Prayer

You may want to ask if anyone is dealing with something they would like prayer for. Especially if your group is not intimately acquainted, it may be good to wait before suggesting group prayer; as you model prayer to begin and continue learning together, you can gradually open it up as others feel safe to pray out loud

## Why Not Ask?

### Introduce the Lesson

**Introduce the lesson** by reading the overview of Lesson 2. “God wants us to ask when we pray. His desire that we make requests of Him shows us His love and His longing for a relationship with us. But asking isn’t only about us and our wants and needs. It’s about God’s kingdom and His purposes and the amazing things He wants to accomplish through us as we pray.”

*Ask if anyone has questions about the lesson or about preparation for the lesson.*

### Review the Lesson Objectives

**Review the Lesson Objectives** below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Have a clear understanding of God’s desire for us to ask when we pray.
- Ascertain God’s priorities for our asking according to Scripture.
- Comprehend the importance of childlike faith when we pray.

### Introduction

Open in prayer.

Read Matthew 6:5-13 or have someone in the group read it out loud.

#### Ideas for Discussion

- *What are some of the examples Jesus gives in this passage of wrong ways to pray?*
- *What is wrong with these examples?*
- *Have you ever been guilty of praying like one of these examples?*
- *Have you ever asked God for something specific that you earnestly needed and received it through the most unlikely person or in the most unexpected way? If so, what happened? If not, what kept you from asking?*

## Review & Discuss

[1] What does the fact that Jesus made bold promises about asking when we pray show us?

- *Can you think of any “bold” prayers that the Bible records Jesus praying?*
- *What other historically “bold” prayers does the Bible record?*
- *Do any of these sound like prayers you’ve prayed? Why or why not?*

[2] Why does God want us to come to Him with our wants and needs?

- *What does God “get out of it” when we come to Him?*
- *Whether or not we seek God, in reality, could we survive if He didn’t meet our needs? Why or why not?*
- *What causes us to hesitate about bringing everything to God?*

[3] Why does Jesus use such broad terms when He invites us to pray?

- *What does Jesus encourage us to pray about in Matthew 7:7–8?*
- *Is there anything He doesn’t care about? Why?*

[4] What does the Lord’s Prayer teach us about making requests when we pray?

- *What is the purpose of the order in which Jesus lists the six requests in the Lord’s Prayer?*
- *Which one is our priority?*
- *What do the first couple of requests help us to do?*

[5] Why is it important to call on the Lord whenever we are tempted?

Read this quote from James Banks: “I love what the German pastor and theologian Helmut Thielicke said. He stood against the Nazi regime during World War II, and he said about this request, ‘Jesus is Victor! He has already won, and all our struggles are only rearguard battles and mop-up actions’ (Our Heavenly Father, p. 135). It’s amazing the difference calling on God can make when you’re in the middle of temptation. It’s like turning on the light outside on a hot night, and seeing the roaches run for cover. The devil simply cannot stand against Jesus, and Jesus wants us to ask Him to help us whenever we struggle.”

- *Think of a temptation that you’ve given into recently. You don’t have to share out loud, but write down how it might have been different if you would have prayed and had God’s light shine on the roaches creeping into your life. If you can share this in a general way, feel free to explain it to the group, since we’ve all struggled with temptations.*

[6] What does Jesus’ illustration of becoming like a little child to enter the kingdom of God show us about our prayers?

- *What is the difference between childish and childlike? Which do you think Jesus was referring to?*
- *Have you heard a child pray? What have you noticed about their prayer that is different from the way you pray?*
- *How could your prayers become more childlike?*

## Reflection

Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of prayer. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes. What will they do differently after what they have learned here?

What have you previously thought about asking God for things? Was it easy or difficult? How has your thinking changed after this study?

## Close in Prayer

Ask if anyone is dealing with something they would like prayer for. Depending on how open your group is with each other, you may want to ask if a few people would be willing to take various requests that have been given by members and pray for them now.

*When You Don't Know What to Say*

## Introduce the Lesson

**Introduce the lesson** by reading the overview of Lesson 3. “The goal of this lesson is to help the student understand that true prayer is about more than simply the words we use. It will equip the student to talk to God in ways that are natural and unforced and to go deeper in learning how to pray according to God’s Word.”

*Ask if anyone has questions about the lesson or about preparation for the lesson.*

## Review the Lesson Objectives

**Review the Lesson Objectives** below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Comprehend that effective prayer isn’t about getting our words just right.
- Have a deeper understanding of how to pray God’s Word, including Scripture’s prayers.
- Gain insight into the relational aspects of prayer.

## Introduction

Open in prayer.

Read Psalm 23 and Psalm 51.

### Ideas for Discussion

- *Can you think of a time where you felt you prayed really poorly or really well? Why?*
- *If a young child asks you for something, how important is it to you how they word their request?*
- *Why do we believe our specific words in prayer are important?*
- *Read Romans 8:26–28. Why does God’s Spirit intercede for us? How does He intercede for us? Do you find this comforting? Why might you not like that He changes your prayers to what is best?*
- *Read Romans 8:34. Who else intercedes for us? How do you feel that both the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ pray to God for you and your life?*



## Review & Discuss

[1] What aspects of God's character show us He isn't concerned with how we sound when we pray?

- *Read Psalm 116. What characteristics of God were emphasized by the author of this Psalm? How were they relevant to the salvation he experienced?*
- *What aspects of God's character would help you remember how much He longs to fellowship with you?*
- *What can you do to remind yourself of this when you feel distant from God?*

[2] Why did Jesus want us to pray, even though He told us "your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:8)?

[3] How did Jesus emphasize the importance of being ourselves with God when we pray?

- *Read Matthew 6:7–8 and Luke 18:9–14. What do these passages tell us about how not to pray? Read Luke 18:15–17. How might this verse give us a contrast of how we should come to God?*
- *Read Psalm 62:8. How does this passage describe how God longs for us to talk to Him?*

[4] What do you call some of the more down-to-earth prayers in the Bible, where people are open and honest with their emotions before God?

- *Read Numbers 11:1–15. What is the difference between what the people said and what Moses said? Why did God get angry at the people, but not get angry with Moses?*
- *Read 1 Kings 19:1–9. What was God's response to Elijah's depression and request to die? If you had been in Elijah's place, how might you have reacted in your depression?*

[5] How does God help us when we pray the prayers of the Bible?

[6] Who, according to Scripture, provides us with the ultimate assurance that our prayers are heard and received with love?

- *For an example, read Romans 8:29–39.*

## Reflection

Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of prayer. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes.

How did you handle it in the past when you did not know what to pray for? How will you handle it differently now?

## Close in Prayer

Spend some time praising God for His character. Open this up to anyone who wants to pray. Maybe start out by saying something like: “You are so compassionate God.” If your group is comfortable, have each one say one thing about God that they’re grateful for like this. Try to have each person only give one thing so that this doesn’t become a contest; however, a person can pray more than once.

Then set your timer for 3–5 minutes and let everyone know that this time is strictly for them to talk to God quietly about their concerns to have the right words or their lack of knowing what words to use for the burdens on their heart. This will likely be uncomfortable for all of you, but once you get used to the silence and delve into prayer, it will become an important time. Be sure to let them know that the timer will indicate when this time is done and you’ll close in prayer, so that they don’t rush through this unsure of what to expect.

### Introduce the Lesson

**Introduce the lesson** by reading the overview of Lesson 4. “There are several common obstacles that can discourage us when we try to pray. In this lesson, we’ll identify the ‘main offenders’ and several helpful strategies for overcoming them. God never intended prayer to be difficult, but rather a source of encouragement and strength in our relationship with Him. This lesson offers a practical “clinic” on prayer in everyday life.”

Ask if anyone has questions about the lesson or about preparation for the lesson.

### Review the Lesson Objectives

**Review the Lesson Objectives** below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Identify five separate challenges or obstacles to praying.
- Ascertain several practical, scriptural strategies for overcoming obstacles to prayer.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the potency of faith with regard to prayer.

### Introduction

Open in prayer.

What is the biggest obstacle to you having a regular prayer time?

### Review & Discuss

[1] Why is deciding to spend time with God earlier in the day important?

- *Read Psalm 5:3 and 88:13.*
- *What does the beginning of the day signify?*
- *What can happen with your focus when you pray first thing in the morning rather than later in the day?*

[2] What is the best thing to do with persistent worry?

- *Read Psalm 62:5–8, Psalm 46:1, 1 Peter 5:7, Proverbs 3:5–6*
- *What do these passages teach us about God and His character?*
- *Do these passages make worry and anxiety sound like feelings we'll likely face? Why or why not?*
- *What do these passages teach us about what we're supposed to do when we feel anxious or worried?*

[3] How does the adversary use our sins to keep us from prayer?

- *Read Revelation 12:10 and Romans 7:21–8:2.*
- *How does the Bible describe Satan in the Revelation passage?*
- *Although Satan accuses us, how does God view us because of Christ in the Romans passage?*

[4] What is the best thing to do when a perpetual sin has become an obstacle to our prayers?

- *Read 1 John 1:9 and Romans 13:11–14*
- *What are three main ideas these passages teach us to do (confess, put aside, put on)?*
- *Why is it important to “clothe yourself” with something after you have taken off the deeds of darkness or why is it important to do something else rather than just stopping the sin?*

[5] What is the best course of action when we are discouraged about previous answers to prayer? (Psalm 55:22)

[6] How do we know that a lack of faith is an obstacle to prayer?

- *Read Hebrews 3:12 and 11:6, Mark 9:23–24*
- *Why is faith a requirement to come to God at any time?*
- *What do you do when you struggle to believe?*

[7] How can we increase our faith when we pray? (Luke 17:5–6)

## Reflection

Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of prayer. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes.

What obstacles can they ask God to help them overcome? Would they be willing to share this with the group and to pray for one another (it might be good to have them break up into groups of about two people to share, if the group is feeling comfortable with each other)?

## Close in Prayer

Spend some time praising God for who He is. Open this up to anyone who wants to pray. Maybe start out by saying something like: “You are so merciful God.” If your group is comfortable, have each one say one thing about God that they’re grateful for like this. Try to have each person only give one thing so that this doesn’t become a contest; however, a person can pray more than once.

Then set your timer for 3–5 minutes and let everyone know that this time is strictly for them to talk to God quietly. Encourage them to spend time confessing to Him the obstacles that have kept them from prayer and to seek His wisdom to remove them. Hopefully, this time the time of quiet prayer will be a little less uncomfortable and the time will go by much faster. Be sure to let them know that the timer will indicate when this time is done and you’ll close in prayer, so that they don’t rush through this unsure of what to expect.

## Introduce the Lesson

**Introduce the lesson** by reading the overview of Lesson 5. “We understand from Scripture that our prayers for others can make a wonderful difference in their lives, but do we also understand the blessings we receive when we love others with our prayers? This lesson is intended to inspire the student to pray for others in creative and practical ways, and to reap the benefits!”

Ask if anyone has questions about the lesson or about preparation for the lesson.

## Review the Lesson Objectives

**Review the Lesson Objectives** below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- *Understand why and how one of the best ways to love someone is to pray for them.*
- *Cite several of the blessings we receive when we pray for others.*
- *Be able to name some practical ways we can intercede for others.*

## Introduction

Open in prayer.

- *When do you pray for others?*
- *What are the most common requests you make for others?*

## Review & Discuss

[1] Have you ever had others pray for you and felt God giving you new strength in those moments? What was it like?

[2] Who prayed for you? What might have happened in your life if they hadn't?

[3] It is important to begin our prayers with praise because... (finish sentence).

[4] What is one of the first blessings we often receive when we pray for others?

[5] Another blessing we often receive when we pray for others is the blessing of more compassion. Which Old Testament patriarch demonstrated compassion for others in his prayers (Genesis 18)?

[6] What is the third blessing Dr. Banks mentions that we may receive when we pray for others (2 Thessalonians 2:16–17)?

[7] What is the fourth blessing we receive when we pray for others (2 Corinthians 1:3–4)?

## Reflection

Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of prayer. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes.

Who have you not prayed for before that you will start praying for now? Can you write down a person in the room and commit to pray for them in the upcoming week?

## Close in Prayer

Spend some time praising God for who He is. Open this up to anyone who wants to pray. Maybe start out by saying something like: “You are a faithful Friend.” If your group is comfortable, have each one say one thing about God that they’re grateful for like this. Try to have each person only give one thing so that this doesn’t become a contest; however, a person can pray more than once.

If your group has enough people, break into groups of preferably two, but no more than three people. Take turns praying for each other (if you share prayer requests, have it be only a sentence or two. Don’t go into great description as God knows each need, so the time is best spent before Him).

Assign different people one of the following passages to use to pray for the other person in each group (if you do this, you may wish to print these out and distribute them):

- *Ephesians 1:16–20*
- *Ephesians 3:14, 16–19*
- *Philippians 1:9–11*

- *Colossians 1:9–12*
- *Colossians 4:12*
- *1 Thessalonians 5:23–24*
- *1 Thessalonians 3:12–13*
- *2 Thessalonians 1:11–12*
- *2 Thessalonians 2:16–17*
- *Philemon 1:4 and 6*
- *Hebrews 13:20–21*



### Introduce the Lesson

**Introduce the lesson** by reading the overview of Lesson 6. “As the Bible clearly indicates, God deeply desires for Christians to pray together, but many believers today struggle with praying with others. This lesson will investigate several biblical mandates for united prayer and a very special promise Jesus made for believers who pray together. It will also delve into several practical suggestions that help make praying with others easier and the blessing God intends it to be.”

Ask if anyone has questions about the lesson or about preparation for the lesson.

### Review the Lesson Objectives

**Review the Lesson Objectives** below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- *Ascertain several biblical reasons for why united prayer matters.*
- *Gain a deeper understanding of a promise Jesus made about His presence and united prayer.*
- *Be familiar with several practical suggestions that facilitate praying with others.*

### Introduction

Open in prayer.

- *Do you like to pray out loud with others? Why or why not?*
- *How does it feel when those around you pray? Do you feel that they consider you trustworthy when they “risk” praying in front of you?*
- *Why do you think God wants us to pray with each other? How does John 17 relate to this?*
- *Which of the four practices that James Banks recommends was one you’d like to implement?*

### Review & Discuss

[1] Sometimes we can be reluctant when it comes to praying with others. How does James’

illustration of his friend John indicate we should see it?

[2] What negative ideas have you had about praying with others? (Be honest!)

[3] What assumption seems to be behind Jesus' teaching us the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13)?

[4] What does Scripture indicate the first Christians were doing when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14)?

[5] What has historically been one of the greatest obstacles to a healthy practice of praying together?

[6] Instead of sharing requests at the beginning of a prayer meeting, what is a better approach for letting others know about them?

## Reflection

Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of prayer. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes.

Challenge the group to look for opportunities in the week ahead to pray with people and to share with the group next week what they learned from the practice.

## Close in Prayer

Spend some time praising God for who He is. Open it up to prayer for everyone or break into smaller groups. Have everyone begin praying for requests they know about from their lives or that others in the group have shared with them previously.

## Introduce the Lesson

**Introduce** the lesson by reading the overview of Lesson 7. “The Bible indicates that prayer with fasting is something God values and blesses, but misunderstandings about fasting abound. Fasting isn’t a practice reserved for the ‘super spiritual’ or something we do to earn God’s attention or approval. Fasting is, however, a way to grow closer in our relationship with God. This lesson takes a down-to-earth look at why fasting matters and offers helpful insight for how to do it.”

Ask if anyone has questions about the lesson or about preparation for the lesson.

## Review the Lesson Objectives

Review the lesson objectives below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

Understand what fasting is and why it matters for prayer.

Be able to cite several examples of prayer with fasting in Scripture.

Ascertain several of the blessings associated with fasting and prayer.

Gain practical insight as to how to approach fasting in your own praying.

## Introduction: Prayer and Fasting

Open in prayer.

Did anyone pray with someone the week before and would they care to share?

Many of us have fasted for a medical reason, but have you ever fasted for a spiritual reason? If so, how long was your fast and what was the experience like?

Have you fasted from other things than food? If so, what and what was your experience?

## Review and Discuss

[1] What does Jesus' teaching on prayer and fasting in Matthew 6:16 tell us about His expectation for us?

Read Matthew 6:5–18

What is wrong with public displays of prayer and fasting? What are we seeking by this?

What does Jesus indicate should be the motivation for prayer and fasting?

What is the difference between praying with others and the kind of public prayer Jesus spoke against? Have you ever struggled with false motivations when you have prayed with others?

[2] Is fasting something we do to get God's attention or gain His approval?

How does James Banks describe the purpose of fasting?

[3] Can you name at least three people who fasted in the Bible?

Examples (if the group is unfamiliar with some of these stories, it may be helpful to choose at least one to read together):

Moses (Deuteronomy 9)

David (2 Samuel 12:16–17)

Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20:3)

Esther (Esther 4:15–17)

Daniel (Daniel 9:3)

Ezra (Ezra 8:21–23)

Jesus (Matthew 4:1–2)

Paul (Acts 9:1–9)

Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:2–3)

[4] What was Jesus' preparation to gain strength against temptation from the devil (Matthew 4:2)?

[5] Why is it important to not let others know we are fasting?

[6] If you are unable to fast from food, what are some other ways you can fast?

## Reflection

Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced. What was one thing they learned from this lesson?

Challenge the members to commit to fast this upcoming week. Ask them to choose either a day or a meal to fast or something else (e.g., TV, social media). During that time, encourage them to

tell God that He is more important to them than what they have given up. Have them consider journaling their prayers or thoughts during this time, so that they can learn even more through it.

## Close in Prayer

Spend some time in prayer together. If appropriate, lead the group through the ACTS prayers—Adoration, Confession (usually done quietly), Thanksgiving, and Supplication. During Adoration, focus only on God's character and not on thanking Him or asking Him for things. Spend a few minutes in each area with as many praying as are willing to.

## *What about “Unanswered” Prayer?*

### Introduce the Lesson

**Introduce** the lesson by reading the overview of Lesson 8. “Unanswered prayer can be one of the most difficult things we face in the Christian faith. God gives us several great promises about prayer in the Bible, but He also shows us examples of faithful individuals whose prayers went unanswered. In this lesson, we’ll dive deeper into the challenges presented by unanswered prayer and learn about what to do when we encounter it in our own lives.”

Ask if anyone has questions about the lesson or about preparation for the lesson.

### Review the Lesson Objectives

**Review the lesson objectives** below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the challenge of unanswered prayer.
- Identify several individuals in Scripture who experienced unanswered prayer.
- Learn how to reconcile unanswered prayer with the promises God has made about prayer in the Bible.
- Learn a practical approach for facing unanswered prayer in your personal life.

### Introduction: What about “Unanswered” Prayer?

Open in prayer.

- Do you mind sharing a prayer you prayed that God seems to have never answered?
- Do you have a prayer that God answered “no” and sometime later you realized how grateful you were for that?
- Do you have a request you are currently praying for that God seems not to answer? How hard is it not to give up?

## Review and Discuss

[1] Why is the response that “there’s no such thing as unanswered prayer” inadequate?

[2] How does Scripture show us that unanswered prayer is not always the result of a lack of faith on our part?

- Examples (if the group is unfamiliar with some of these stories, it may be helpful to choose at least one to read together):
  - ◊ Moses (Deuteronomy 3:23–26)
  - ◊ David (2 Samuel 12)
  - ◊ Jeremiah (Jeremiah 7:13–16)
  - ◊ Paul (2 Corinthians 12:8–9)
  - ◊ Jesus (Matthew 26:36–50)

[3] How do we reconcile unanswered prayer with some of the great promises Jesus made about praying?

Read Matthew 21:22 and John 14:14.

- What expectations do we have after reading these promises?

Read John 16:33 and Luke 6:22.

- What is the seeming contradiction between these verses and the promises we read before?
- What question can help us reconcile the differences between the promises of good and the promises of trouble?

[4] Why is submitting our wills and our intellects to God important when we pray?

[5] If we knew the reasons our prayers were sometimes not answered, would we be able to accept them?

[6] Why is casting our cares on Jesus (1 Peter 5:7) so important?

## Reflection

Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of prayer, specifically when it is unanswered.

Have each person write down one prayer request that they will not give up on even if they don’t see the answers. Also, have them write down beside it: “Do I expect that all of my prayers will be answered the way that I would like them to be?” They can answer this in their mind or write it down.

## Close in Prayer

Spend time thanking God for prayers that have been answered. As anyone feels led, have them also thank God for the prayers that have been unanswered or that He has said “no” to.



## *Persevering in Prayer*

### Introduce the Lesson

**Introduce** the lesson by reading the overview of Lesson 9. “Persevering in prayer isn’t easy. If we’re not attentive, we can confuse the need to keep praying about something with God saying ‘no’ and give up without seeing any results. But the vital importance of going the distance in prayer is illustrated in multiple places in both the Old and New Testaments. In this lesson, we’ll examine what God’s Word has to teach us about this vital topic and gain practical insight for persevering in prayer ourselves.”

*Ask if anyone has questions about the lesson or about preparation for the lesson.*

### Review the Lesson Objectives

**Review the lesson objectives** below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand something of the frequency with which perseverance in prayer is illustrated in Scripture.
- Ascertain how persevering in prayer honors God and exercises our faith.
- Comprehend the difference between waiting for God when we pray and waiting with God.

### Introduction: Persevering in Prayer

Open in prayer.

- How do you determine if God has answered your prayer with a “no” versus not answering it?
- What is the longest you’ve ever prayed for something? If you don’t mind sharing, what was it?

## Review and Discuss

- [1] What do Elijah's actions in 1 Kings 18 teach us about praying?
- [2] What is the difference between enduring and persevering when we pray?
- The dictionary defines
    - ◊ Enduring: continuing or long-lasting.: "He formed a number of enduring relationships with women"; "an enduring problem."
    - ◊ Persevering: continuing in a course of action despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.: "She has been a remarkably steadfast and persevering woman."
  - What do you think the difference is between these when it comes to prayer?
- [3] What is the meaning of Jesus' telling us to ask, seek, and knock in Luke 11:9?
- *It might help to remind them of James Banks' explanation: "The grammatical tense of those commands in the original language indicates perpetual action—in other words, 'Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking.'"*
- [4] What do Jesus' parables about persevering in prayer show us (Luke 11 and 18)?
- [5] What is the difference between waiting with God and waiting for God when we pray?
- Banks quoted this from Oswald Chambers: "The majority of us know nothing about waiting. We don't wait, we endure. Waiting means that we go on in the perfect certainty of God's goodness—no dumps or fear." Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
- [6] How does praying God's promises help us when we pray?
- What are some of the promises in God's Word that we can cling to while we wait for answers?
- [7] How does thinking of persevering in prayer as laying hold of God's highest willingness—not overcoming His reluctance—help us when we pray?

## Reflection

*Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of prayer. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes.*

*Ask if they have viewed God as more reluctant to answer or willing to answer? Why? How has that changed after studying this lesson?*

## Close in Prayer

Spend some time thanking God for His answers to prayer and for His willingness to answer. Then pray for some of the requests that are in need of persevering prayer.

## Introduce the Lesson

**Introduce the lesson** by reading the overview of Lesson 10. “This lesson will investigate how to live increasingly in God’s presence through prayer—a relationship that God deeply desires. We will examine the examples of several very different individuals throughout history who have prayerfully ‘lived in the moment’ with their risen Savior and have been greatly blessed as a result.”

*Ask if anyone has questions about the lesson or about preparation for the lesson.*

## Review the Lesson Objectives

**Review the lesson objectives** below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand a simple, practical definition of prayer you can immediately apply to life.
- Ascertain the importance of simple thanks and praise for living in God’s presence.
- Comprehend the importance of prayer for a childlike, dependent relationship with God.

## Introduction: Living a Prayer-Filled Life

Open in prayer.

- Would you or anyone you know characterize your life as being a prayer-filled life? Why or why not?

## Review and Discuss

[1] What is a very simple but accurate definition of prayer for believers? (Prayer is being with Jesus.)

[2] What does Jesus’ promise to us in John 14:18 remind us about practicing His presence?

- [3] Jesus has promised to be with us always, but what is our part in being with Him?
- [4] What do the prayers of the Bible teach us about our own practice of prayer and living in God's presence?
- [5] Why is remaining in God's presence important as we go through the day?
- [6] What does Jesus' practice of prayer show us about living in God's presence?

## Reflection

Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of prayer. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes.

Ask the members what is one practical and small step they can take daily to begin having a prayer-filled life, a life of just being with Jesus. Have them share that with at least one other person in the group.

## Close in Prayer

Lead the group through ACTS praying again. Have the members seek God's help to consciously live in His presence moment by moment.