

Christian Discipleship Guide



“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

5. Prayer

1. Someone once said that a Christian is only as strong as his prayer life. There is a great deal of truth in this because prayer is simply our direct communication with God. When we read the Bible, God speaks to us. When we pray, we speak to God. Our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ cannot grow without proper communication, so prayer is a very important part of our spiritual life. A proper prayer life can open the lines of communication between us and the Lord, and can have a positive effect on our lives. One thing we can do right now, to see the effect that prayer can have in our lives, is to keep a list of prayer requests as well as the answers to those prayers in our own “prayer journal.”
2. Much can be accomplished through prayer. Leonard Ravenhill wrote, “Poverty stricken as the Church is today in many things, she is most stricken here, in the place of prayer. We have many organizers, but few agonizers; many players and payers, but few prayers; many singers, but few clingers; lots of pastors, but few wrestlers; many fears, few tears; much fashion, little passion; many interferers, few intercessors; many writers, but few fighters. Failing here, we fail everywhere.” Things that can be accomplished through prayer are the following: prayer changes us so that we rely on God to direct our paths (*Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 4:7; Romans 8:26-28*); we are able to fight spiritual warfare (*Ephesians 6:11-18; Luke 22:31-32; 1 Thessalonians 1:2*); we acknowledge our submission to the will of God (*Matthew 26:42*); God demonstrates His presence and power in our daily lives (*Hebrews 4:12-16*); prayer serves as a spiritual watchdog against temptation (*Mark 14:38; 2 Corinthians 13:7; 1 Corinthians 10:13*); and prayer is pleasing to God (*Revelation 5:8; Revelation 8:3-4; Proverbs 15:8*).
3. Prayer places the believer in an attitude of expectancy. The individual who does not pray tends to depend on human invention, circumstances, and expediency to make decisions. The praying Christian is spiritually sensitized to the Spirit of God (*1 John 4:1-3*). To the Christian, “coincidences,” “luck,” and “accidents” are really “miracles” where God chooses to remain anonymous (*Ephesians 3:20-21*).
4. According to *Luke 11:1-13* and *Matthew 6:5-15*, Jesus taught us how to pray. There are several necessary ingredients of prayer:
5. Worship, Adoration and Praise – Our prayers are often characterized by selfishness. The objective of our prayers tends to be the fulfillment of our personal desires and well being. If we worship God, we “must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (*John 4:24*). We must recognize God for who He is and worship Him in His holiness (*Daniel 9:3-4; Isaiah 6:1-3*).
6. Confession – As sinners, not one of us is worthy to approach the throne of God. But, because of our position in Christ who is our great High Priest, the Bible instructs us to boldly approach the throne of grace (*Hebrews 4:16*). Even though Christ purged our sins, confession reminds us of God’s mercy and helps us to assume a humble posture before God. For example, see David’s prayer in *Psalms 51:4* and Daniel’s prayer in *Daniel 9:3-19*.
7. Restitution – Our willingness to make restitution (where it is possible) is the proof of genuine, sincere, repentant confession. Restitution also reaffirms our faith in God and His provision for our life. Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, when faced with his sins of dishonesty, was so overwhelmed by the righteousness and holiness of Jesus that he promised Jesus that he would not only make full restitution to anyone he cheated, but he would pay them back four times what he owed them (*Luke 19:8*).
8. Thanksgiving – The Apostle Paul taught his Christian brothers (and us) to present requests to the Lord with an attitude of thanksgiving (*Philippians 4:6; Hebrews 13:15*).
9. Forgiveness – Jesus instructed us to forgive others if we expect our heavenly Father to forgive us (*Matthew 6:12-15*).

10. Unity – The Apostle Paul reprimanded some of the Christians in the early church for quarreling and divisiveness. He encouraged them to be in harmony with one another so that they might be perfectly united in mind and thought as followers of Jesus (*Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 1:10*). And in *Matthew 18:19-20*, Jesus said, “Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”
11. Faith – The Apostle James tells us to ask of God in faith, without wavering (*James 1:5-6*). “Asking in faith” does not mean that we must conjure up a positive assurance within ourselves that what we ask for will take place if we believe hard enough. James suggests that we should not waver in what we ask, and that our Christian walk should be consistent with our talk (*James 2:17-18*), that is, we show our faith by our actions or works. Someone once said, “Your actions speak so loudly, I can’t hear a word you’re saying.” Our actions are an outward manifestation of our inner faith.
12. Petition – Both *Matthew 7:7-8* and *Luke 11:9* captured Jesus’ words to “... Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” These words convey the thought that, not only are we to make our requests known to God, but we should also be persistent in our prayer requests. Jesus emphasized this principle in *Luke 11:8* where He said to present our petitions with importunity, that is, urgently and persistently.
13. Submission – At Gethsemane (*Matthew 26:42*), Jesus gave us the ultimate ingredient of prayer when He submitted to the Father’s will by saying, “Thy will be done.”
14. Without Repetition – When we pray, we should not use what Jesus called “vain repetitions” (*Matthew 6:7*). For example, the Muslims use strings of prayer beads containing 99 beads, with each bead representing one of the 99 names of Allah that appear in the Koran. They repeat the 99 names of Allah over and over as one of their major forms of prayer.
15. The Bible tells us to pray everywhere (*1 Timothy 2:8*), but especially in our own private place (*Matthew 6:6*) and in church (*Luke 18:10; Acts 3:1; Psalm 26:12; 1 Kings 8:22-53*). We are to pray always (*Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17*): in the morning (*Psalm 5:3*), at noon and in the evening (*Psalm 55:17*), every day and every night (*Psalm 86:3; Daniel 6:10; Psalm 88:1*), and before every meal. And, the Bible tells us to pray specifically for the return of Christ, the will of God to be done, daily provisions, forgiveness, guidance, victory over temptation and sin (*Matthew 6:9-13*); the sick (*James 5:13-16*); those in authority in our government and the salvation of the lost (*1 Timothy 2:1-4*); health and long life (*Isaiah 38:1-5*); safety for ourselves and others (*Daniel 6:18-23*); wisdom, knowledge and understanding (*2 Chronicles 1:7-12; 1 Kings 3:5-9*); travel safety (*Romans 1:10*); spiritual maturity of Christian brethren (*Colossians 1:28*); and those in authority over us in our local church (*1 Timothy 5:17*).
16. However, nowhere in the Bible does God tell us to pray for the dead, for once a person dies, he or she is either saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and goes to heaven or is unsaved and faces eternal damnation (*John 3:16; Acts 4:12*). When the Good Thief expressed his faith in Jesus, Jesus promised that the thief would be with Him in Paradise that same day (*Luke 23:42-43*). The Apostle Paul wrote that “whilst we (believers) are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: ... We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (*2 Corinthians 5:6-8*).
17. Likewise, we are not to pray to the dead, to spirits or to idols (*Deuteronomy 18:10-12; 2 Kings 23:24; John 14:6*). This would go directly against God’s First and Second Commandments (*Exodus 20:2-5*). Hezekiah even destroyed the brass serpent that Moses had

made during the Exodus because the children of Israel were burning incense to it and venerating it (*Numbers 21:8-9; 2 Kings 18:4*).

18. Even though we pray, sometimes God does not answer our prayers, or does not answer them the way we would like Him to. For example, the label on a can of paint reads, "Clean the surface thoroughly. Remove dirt, grease, wax, and oil. Scrape off any loose paint. Patch and prime large cracks. Do not apply if temperature is below 50 degrees Fahrenheit." If we violate these instructions, we will have one big mess on our hands. Likewise, when we get into a mess with God, He does not answer our prayers if any of the following conditions exist:
 19. If we willingly violate His will and commandments. Our sin keeps God from answering our prayers (*Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 28:9; Isaiah 59:2; John 9:31; 1 John 3:22; 1 Peter 3:12*).
 20. When our requests contradict His intended means of chastisement in our lives. In the case of David, God could have spared the life of his child, but God determined that it would be more beneficial for David if the chastisement were complete (*2 Samuel 12:16-18*). By the way, God can change His mind as He did in the case of Nineveh (*Jonah 3:10*).
 21. When someone prays to the wrong god (*1 Kings 18:26; Acts 17:22-31*).
 22. If we want our prayers answered in our timing. Our timing is not always God's timing, and He teaches us faith, patience, and perseverance in just such circumstances where we must wait upon Him. Time is not nearly as important to God as it is to us. God's "delays" are well thought out. In *Nehemiah 1:1 to 2:6*, four months pass between request and answer.
 23. When we have improper interpersonal relationships, such as between a husband and wife (*1 Peter 3:7*), holding grudges (*Ephesians 4:26; Mark 11:25-26; James 5:9*), or imagining evil against others (*Zechariah 7:9-13*).
 24. When prayer is pretentious (*Matthew 23:14*), insincere (*Psalm 109:7*), hypocritical (*Ecclesiastes 5:3*), or repetitious (*Matthew 6:7*).
 25. When prayer is used strictly for selfish reasons (*James 4:3*).
 26. When God chooses not to answer. Sometimes the answer is "no." God is sovereign above us and is not someone who "must" answer our prayers. He is not a "911 Emergency" operator who "must" respond to every call. God does not act without purpose (*2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Matthew 26:39-44; 1 John 5:14-15; Romans 8:27*). The miracle is that He does hear us and does answer many of our prayers.
 27. When we are prideful and will not, in humility, assume our proper place before Him (*Luke 18:10-14*).
 28. Throughout the Scriptures, prayer is often accompanied by the biblical practice of fasting (*Mark 9:29*). To "fast" is to abstain from food voluntarily for a particular time. The idea is to deny our flesh and show God how serious we are about our prayer. In *Matthew 17:18-21*, the disciples asked Jesus why they were not able to cast out a particular demon, and He replied that this kind of devil does not get cast out except by prayer and "fasting." Prayer with fasting is still beneficial for us today and will move the hand of God on our behalf (*2 Chronicles 20:1-12; Ezra 8:21-23; Nehemiah 1:1-11; Isaiah 58:6; Matthew 4:1-2; Acts 13:1-3; Acts 14:23; Acts 27:33; Matthew 9:25-29; Jonah 3:1-10*).

29. **Questions:**

30. List several necessary ingredients of prayer:

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32. _____

33. _____

34. _____

35. _____

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38. _____

39. _____

40. _____

41. Where are we to pray?

42. _____

43. _____

44. _____

45. When are we to pray? _____

46. What prayer of Abraham did God NOT answer (see *Genesis 18:20-33*)?

47. What city did God spare from destruction because they fasted and prayed (see Jonah 3:1-10)?

48. **Additional Scripture Verses:**

1 Chronicles 4:9-10; Psalm 2:8; Proverbs 28:9; Jeremiah 29:11-14; Matthew 6:10-13; Matthew 7:7-11; Matthew 21:21-22; Luke 11:5-13; Ephesians 6:10-18; Philippians 4:6; Hebrews 4:15-16; James 4:1-2; James 5:16-18; 1 John 5:14-15.