

# Contents

## Preface

## Contents

### Section One

Preliminary Lessons – page 3

Why Pray?

How to Pray

Go to Your Prayer Closet

Section One Steps – page 6

Step 1 – Knowing God

Step 2 – Learn a Godly Perspective

Step 3 – Led of the Spirit

Step 4 – Witness for Jesus

Step 5 – Having the Right Heart Attitude

Step 6 – Believe for the Impossible

Step 7 – Become a Person of Faith

### Section Two

Preliminary Lessons – page 13

Who Can Pray

Eat Bread

Section Two Steps – page 17

Step 8 – Remove the Stones

Step 9 – Faith Is the Victory

Step 10 – Prayer Is Listening

Step 11 – Suffering with Christ

Step 12 – Serving in Prayer

Step 13 – Power in the Blood

Step 14 – Asking in Jesus' Name

### Section Three

Preliminary Lessons – page 24

Clean the Table

Praise the Lord

Petitions

Section Three Steps – page 26

Step 15 – Purging by the Spirit

Step 16 – Weeping in Prayer

Step 17 – Praying for the Disciples

Step 18 – Dealing with Disappointments

Step 19 – Suffering Persecution

Step 20 – Praying in the Spirit

Step 21 – Bringing in the Catch

Yes, You Can Pray!

## Order Page

## WHY PRAY? Group/Individual Study

### Pray To Know Who God Is

Prayer is a means to help us love God with all of our heart. When we pray, we are spending time communing with God. We all know that time is important in our relationships. Our initial impression of a person may not be very accurate. However, the more we are with him/her, we will find out how accurate that first impression was. Just as spending time with a friend will help us to understand what that person is all about, spending time communing with God will help us to understand God better. We may think we know the character of God, but unless we have spent time with Him, we may easily be deceived. Being alone with God will help us to love and appreciate Him more as we see more of the glory and perfection of His character and ways.

### Pray To Become Like God

Another truth to consider is that the people we spend time with will “rub off on us.” If we spend more time with God, whether it’s in prayer, Bible study, or quietly listening to Him, we will begin to acquire some godly traits. Now, that is time well spent!! As you practice prayer, you will find greater and greater joy in being in the presence of God. Your love for Him will grow, and you will find yourself becoming more like Him.

List some people you spend a lot of time with:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What traits have you or could you pick up from them?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In relation to others, how much time do you spend alone with God?

What traits would you like to pick up from God?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Pray That God’s Will May be Done

Thirdly, prayer will help us to see the needs of the world around us. It is so easy to get tunnel vision as a Christian and only see the needs that we, personally, have. As we spend more time in prayer, we will experience a greater love for God’s creation around us. As we begin to build this bridge to God’s will, we will find that God Himself will begin to share with us His vision and His needs. God, too, has concerns

and prayer burdens that are far beyond our imaginations. The sky is NOT the limit... We know that God is not limited, and the adventure in prayer is as the Scripture says, *“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”* (1 Cor. 2:9).

You may say, “The Lord knows more about the troubles of this world than I do, why do I need to tell Him about them?” Good question. For some mysterious reason, God has limited Himself to work within the realm of our prayers. There is no doubt that He is able to take care of these needs without us if He so chooses. But, we see over and over again in Scripture how God waited until prayer was made by His people. James 5:15 says *“And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up...”* We have to ask in prayer! In Mark 11:24, Jesus says, *“What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”* This Scripture indicates that these things are given to us as we believe in prayer. What troubles are facing you? Don’t miss the help you need because you did not ask. This puts the responsibility back on us, doesn’t it? There may be problems in your church or family. There is likely immorality in your school or workplace. There are souls that are lost and dying. Begin to spend time with God. As you spend time with Him, He will help you to know what prayers are the key to unlock the strongholds to the enemy’s camp! He wants to and can use your prayers to change the world—one prayer at a time. He is waiting to hear from you.

God answers prayer. Please list below the prayers that were answered for these Bible characters.

Jonah (Jonah 2:1)

Hannah (1 Sam. 1:27)

Peter (Acts 12:5)

How do you think things would have been different if they had lost hope with their situations and prayer in faith had not been made?

Commit yourself to seek God's will in prayer for the needs that you see in your everyday life—not just telling God what you think He should do, but spending time seeking His will in prayer.

## HOW TO PRAY

“Dear Lord, help Mom and Dad, my dog, Fido, and please help me pass my history test tomorrow because you know I didn’t have much time to study, and help Marge’s aunt who has cancer. Help her to be healed ....and, uh, ...to feel better. Amen.”

Prayer is a great thing. After all, it is talking to the God of the Universe. How can you beat that? But, does it sometimes seem like there should be...well...a little more to it than the prayer written above? How can we pray and really know that we are connecting with heaven? A Christian without prayer is like a car without wheels...you can’t go anywhere! That is probably why God commanded us to *“Pray without ceasing”* (1 Thess. 5:17). The Word tells us that true Christianity is to love the Lord our God with all our heart...and our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:37–39). Getting to this place takes prayer!

There is also something special about a "place of prayer." We know that David prayed by the hillsides and along the valleys, and Daniel prayed three times before his open window (Dan. 6:10). Peter prayed on the rooftop (Acts 10:9). Jesus prayed in a garden and on mountain tops. Notice that each one of these people found the time to pray and that they also found a place to pray in.

Of course, we can pray almost anywhere, and the Bible tells us to pray without ceasing, but Jesus said: *"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly"* (Matt. 6:6).

## GO TO YOUR PRAYER CLOSET

**Prayer Closet:** Let's continue by finding a prayer closet. Go find a prayer closet—a place where you will begin to read, pray and worship God. Make sure this place is pleasing to Jesus!

The most important thing to look for in the room is that everything there is helping you to focus on prayer. That means a minimum of distractions. If your brother has to keep coming in and out of the room, you won't have the focus you need. Choose somewhere where you can be alone. If you have a house full of people, your place of prayer may need to literally be a closet. You can have some great prayer times in closets and even hotel bathrooms!

Distractions can also come in the form of things in the room. Look around at the room you chose. What pictures/posters are on the walls? Do they help you to have a spirit of prayer? What furniture is in the room? Is there a too-comfortable chair that will bring temptation to get sleepy in? Are there magazines laying around that you will want to pick up and read?

Even though most of us don't have a "perfect" place to pray, the point is to make the changes you can. There is no need to have distractions that you can do something about.

**Praying Is Time Well Spent:** How much time should you spend in prayer? The best answer is probably however much you can. If you are just beginning in prayer, ten minutes may be plenty at first. Gradually increase the time as the Lord lays more petitions on your heart. You may want to start out with a list of things—it is easy for our minds to go blank! Once you have been praying for a year or two, you may be able to easily fill 30 minutes, an hour, or more in prayer! But, don't worry about that at the beginning. Remember, we need to practice prayer to make it become a part of us.

**Prayer Postures:** In what position should I pray? Should I keep my eyes closed? The answer to these questions is similar to how we find a place to pray: whatever helps you focus on prayer is the most important. If your mind wanders more when your eyes are shut, then open them and pray, and vice versa. As for your posture, look at these Scriptures for examples to how others prayed: Neh. 9:5 – standing; Ezra 9:5 – kneeling; 1 Chron. 17:16–27 – sitting; Ex. 34:8 – bowing; 1 Tim. 2:8 – raised hands.

## Yes, You Can Pray

To learn to pray takes practice. The following steps 1–21 consists of a daily devotion and prayer exercises. Take a step at a time. Don't skip the steps or run, but walk through them each day, a step at a time. Let's go...to step 1, and *"enter into thy prayer closet..."*

# STEP 1

## WHY PRAY?

### Knowing God

**BIBLE READING:** This study only asks that you read portions of each chapter of John. However, some of you may want to read the entire chapter each day to get a better picture of what we are discussing.

#### Read John 1:19–27

Verse 22: *“Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?”*

The priests and Levites wanted to know who John the Baptist was. They knew he was someone great, but they could not figure him out. This is how most of the world views God. Yes, He is awesome, but who is He, really? Does He consist only of love as the world knows it, a kind of love that provides everything that anyone wants? Is His love the kind of love that forgives any lifestyle or behavior, even without a repentant spirit?

Or is He a God of judgment? Is He angry with us all the time? Is every negative thing that happens to be interpreted as a judgment from God?

Spending time with God in prayer will help us to know more about His character. It will help us to understand more of His ways. The more time we spend with God, the more we will know what He wants us to ask for in prayer...and the more we will be amazed at His wisdom.

## Practicing Prayer

There is another avenue in getting to know God better. This is through the pastors and teachers that He set over us: *“And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints...”* (Eph. 4:11–12). This indicates that if we have not placed ourselves under the spiritual authorities which God has given us, then we will be missing out on part of what we need to know about God. And how can we benefit from our pastors and spiritual teachers unless we are consistently in the place where they are teaching? Is church a priority for you? Do you let weariness, sports events, social events or homework keep you out of the house of God? Consistency in church is very important and Biblical: *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”* (Heb. 10:25). Begin today by making church attendance a priority in your life.

What was Jesus doing on these Sabbath Days?

Luke 4:16

Luke 4:31

List the church services that you plan to attend faithfully while practicing the Steps to Faith.

Write a short prayer here asking the Lord to reveal more of His character to you as you commit more of your time to prayer in the next 21 days.

## WHY PRAY?

### Learn a Godly Perspective

#### Read John 2:13–25

Verse 25: *“And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”*

Many believed in Jesus because of the miracles that He did. Verse 24 says, *“But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men.”* He knew that they would betray Him later, but they did not know this! The Scriptures tell us that our hearts are deceitfully wicked above all things (Jer. 17:9). The crowd believed that they loved Jesus, but their love did not hold true when it was tested. They had a certain idea of how their Savior should be, and when their expectations were not met, they forsook Him.

This is why we need to pray. Prayer helps us to love and appreciate God as He is. It is easy to expect God to do things in a way that makes sense to our human minds, but in the end, we will be disappointed and disillusioned. The more time we spend in prayer, the less surprised we will be at the way God answers our prayers.

God may send suffering into our lives to make us more compassionate toward others. He may allow us to be financially needy for a while so that we will learn to trust in Him more. There is no reason to fear the unknown, for God will do all things well in our lives. He is perfect in all His ways.

## Practicing Prayer

Read through the list below and check mark those items which are godly expectations that we can have of God.

To be faithful

To make me wealthy at a young age so I can tithe more

To be holy

To make my parents see things my way

To help me to grow spiritually

To provide me with nice clothes

To help me be kind to others

To help me through every difficulty

To deliver me out of every problem

Pray that the Lord will help you to have a heart that loves Him with no strings attached. Tell the Lord that you are committed to spending time with Him in order to get to know Him better.

Read Psalm 47 aloud as part of your prayer today. Focus on the greatness of God as you are reading. Spend time quietly thinking of what you have read. Thank the Lord for His goodness and power. Finish with any petitions (specific prayers) that you may have.

## STEP 3

### WHY PRAY?

#### Led of the Spirit

Read John 3:1–13

Verse 8: *“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”*

Jesus is telling Nicodemus that a man must be born again in order to be saved. This was a foreign spiritual concept for that time. The only way Nicodemus could understand “being born again” was in a physical sense. Jesus explained that the Spirit of God and those born of the Spirit cannot be figured out by the natural mind. This is also stated in 1 Corinthians 2:11b, *“even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”*

We need the Spirit of God to live within us! What the Spirit tells us to do may not make sense to the natural mind, but we will always find out that it is exactly what needs to be done.

Let’s say you are about to go out the door to shoot some baskets, and the Spirit may lay it on your heart to call your friend, Jim, to encourage him. Your natural mind may say, “I really would rather play basketball right now. This may be the only chance I will get today to do it. Surely I can call Jim another day.” But, let’s assume you had your prayer time that morning, and you had the strength and godly perspective to overcome the barriers of your own desires, and you call Jim anyway. Upon calling Jim, you find out that he had a really rough day and was feeling especially discouraged. Your call is just what he needed to get him back on track. Your heart is filled with joy and thanksgiving that God was able to lead you and use you in His work.

This is how the Spirit of God is: not reasonable to our natural minds, but always leading us to what is needed!

### Practicing Prayer

List here how the Spirit of God moved in ways contrary to the natural mind:

Jericho (Josh. 6:6–20)

Gideon (Judg. 7:1–7,19–21)

Lazarus (John 11:1–46)

Catching fish (Luke 5:4–11)

Take a moment to thank the Lord that His ways are higher than our ways!

This is part of the adventure of walking with God, not knowing what the Spirit may ask us to do next. We know it will always be something good! Learning to pray will help us to be more in tune with the Spirit. The salvation or encouragement of others may hinge on our prayers.

Dear Lord,  
Help me to open up myself to Your ways and Your Spirit. Teach me to put aside my own pre-conceived ideas and listen to that still small voice of Your Spirit. Thank You for sending your Spirit to lead us. (Finish with any petitions that may be on your heart.) Amen.

Helpful Hint:

One way the Spirit can lead us is through direction we receive from our authorities. When your parents give counsel, take it as from the Spirit! When your youth pastor asks for volunteers to pray a prayer, take it as direction from the Holy Spirit and do it!

## WHY PRAY?

### Witness for Jesus

Read John 4:7–26

#### The Woman at the Well

Jesus did not hesitate to speak to the Samaritan woman at the well about her spiritual condition. To most, she would seem like too hard of a case. She was in great sin, and she was a part of a heathen culture. Most would not have guessed that she was ready to hear the gospel and would have written her off as one forever lost. This event is a great example for us to follow in witnessing.

Part of being pleasing to God is not being ashamed to share Jesus with others. *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 10:32). Who is it to whom you do not witness because you think they are forever lost? Is she or he a classmate who is known for sleeping around? Is he a neighbor with a ponytail who has drinking parties every weekend, or how about the most popular kid in your class? Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to overcome the fears and preconceived ideas you have about witnessing. Sometimes a simple word like “Jesus loves you,” or “God has helped me overcome many of my problems,” is enough to open the door to someone’s heart.

There are opportunities to witness every time we are out and about town. Cashiers, salespersons and fellow shoppers could be helped by a few words like, “I’m thankful for the beautiful day the Lord has given us,” or “May God bless and encourage you today.”

Don’t be ashamed of Jesus and His name. There is joy that comes after a word of witnessing, even if you don’t get a positive response. Seeds are planted in others’ hearts as you obey God by witnessing to others.

## Practicing Prayer

List three reasons why you find it difficult to witness:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now take this list and talk to Jesus about these weaknesses in prayer. Ask Jesus to help you be a better witness, and ask Him to help you to share the good news of Jesus Christ to you friends and family.

List one person you would like Jesus to save:

Remember, someone prayed for you to find Jesus, so take time in prayer talking to Jesus about this lost soul you listed above. Keep remembering them each day throughout this study.

## STEP 5

### HOW TO PRAY

#### Having the Right Heart Attitude

Read John 5:1–16

##### Jesus Heals the Man at Bethesda

Here we find that Jesus not only found time to go to the Lord's House on the Sabbath, but He also found time to help those in need. The Spirit of God led Jesus into the synagogue on the Lord's day, and the Spirit also led Him to heal a man with an infirmity. This is a beautiful picture of the character of God.

How many of us feel like we have done our duty once we have been to church on Sunday morning? Could it be that the Spirit of God would also have a plan for us in the afternoon?

In verse 44, Jesus is quoted as saying, *"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"* Jesus could have gained honor from the Pharisees just by attending the Sabbath services. However, He was seeking to please God only.

As a Christian, it can become easy to please other Christians around us by our good outward behavior. Man may be pleased by spiritual words, appearances and actions, but God looks at the attitude of the heart to see if we are following His Spirit everywhere He wants us to go.

We must always have our heart turned heavenward for God's direction if we want to be in such a condition that our prayers can be answered. The Spirit may lead us to go to our room to read the Word, or to visit our grandmother, or to tell our mother how much we appreciate her. The Spirit could just as easily tell us that we have pride in our hearts that needs to be confessed or that we need a better attitude about our homework.

The Spirit of the Living God wants to speak to you. Are you listening?

### Practicing Prayer

Sit quietly for a few moments. Go over the last day or two and ask the Lord to show you if there is anything the Spirit wants to show you in your life that needs to be changed. Ask for forgiveness and cleansing from these things.

You may list them here if you wish:

If there is anything not quite correct, the Holy Spirit will show you what you need to do to make corrections.

Sit quietly a little longer. Ask the Lord to show you if there is anything He may want you to do today which you had not planned on doing:

Lift any other petitions that you may have.

## HOW TO PRAY

### Believe for the Impossible

Read John 6:1–14

#### The Feeding of the Five Thousand

Verse 9: *“There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”*

Andrew is trying to answer Jesus’ question about how they were going to feed such a great multitude. Phillip had just answered that it was practically impossible to try.

Andrew gave the Lord the window that He needed to do a miracle. Andrew’s faith was still quite small and doubtful: *“what are they among so many?”* but it was faith nonetheless. Why else would Andrew bring up using five loaves and two fish to feed five thousand? Did Andrew really think that Jesus would be able to feed the multitude? Yes, he did! His natural mind may have been fighting him all the way, but there was that whisper of faith.

Faith is essential for prayers to be answered. All we can offer are the very meager possibilities that we have. That is all that God needs, and He will do the rest! The meager possibility that you have may be the 30% chance that the doctors give to a cancer patient. It could be a few stumbling words spoken to an unsaved friend, or even your rotten attitude toward your sister or brother that needs to change.

Impossible? I’m glad Andrew had a little faith. Give God what you have, and truly believe in faith for Him to make up the difference. Even though it may not be our way or our time, God will move on our behalf if we exercise being pleasing to Him and hang on in stubborn faith.

## Practicing Prayer

List some personal needs, even those that seem impossible, that you will have faith for:

List some needs of others that you will trust God to help you to have faith for:

Pray for these and any other petitions that you may have.

Helpful Hint:

Reviewing a psalm like Psalm 147 or reviewing other Bible stories where God came through and answered prayer will help you picture God in the all-powerful way that He deserves. Following is an example where God answered a need in an unpredictable way: Genesis 24—Abraham’s servant finds Rebekah for Isaac. (God can help you to find your spouse, too!)

## STEP 7

### HOW TO PRAY

#### Become a Person of Faith

Read John 7:32–39

Verses 37–38: *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”*

If we are thirsty for something more in our lives, then we must try (drink of) the way of Christ. Half-hearted drinking will not satisfy our thirst. Commit to doing all that is pleasing to God as we have discussed in earlier steps. This is what we were created to do—the will of God. Nothing else will satisfy and bring us joy as drinking of God’s will.

This is literally exercising our faith that what Jesus has taught us is true and that it works. *“He that believeth on me...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”* As we believe and drink of Christ’s water to satisfy our thirst, we will then be able to offer this water to others.

Our faith in action (doing the will of God through prayer and obedience) will supply many others who are thirsty with what they are looking for. The Spirit of God will be able to help us to have words of encouragement just at the right time. The Holy Spirit will help us to pray for souls to be saved in our school or even in China. These prayers will be collected in heaven and then are poured out for certain ones to be saved.

The rivers of living water flowing out of us will also be a blessing to our family. Our words will be kinder, our attitude will be sweet and our humility can change the whole chemistry of our family’s relationships. Our criticism of others who are weak will turn into prayers for their strengthening. We will feel bitterness leaving us and Christ’s love and joy filling us. What a wonderful way is the way of Christ if we will only believe and act upon that belief!

### Practicing Prayer

Make a prayer list of people who normally irritate you, and you are now committing to pray for them rather than being critical of them.

Pray for them to be encouraged and to feel the love of God.

Pray for their spiritual walk to be strengthened. Continue this prayer each day, and throughout your study, and watch your love for them grow!

Pray and ask the Lord to show you where your faith may be half-hearted and not be shown in your actions.

Go back to Steps 4 and 6 and continue to pray today for the needs you listed on those pages. Remember them in prayer during the next two weeks.

Pray for any other petitions that may be on your heart.

## WHO CAN PRAY?

### Group/Individual Study

Did you find a place to pray (prayer closet) while reading steps 1–7?

List here your thoughts and experiences that you had when you prayed in your prayer closet:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Anyone can pray, but it is important when we pray that we ask and believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. *“...Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son”* (John 14:13). Of course, we may not get the very thing we ask, but we know that Jesus said, *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?”* (Luke 11:13). We do know that God’s ear is always listening for the truly repentant prayer, and God is eager to save anyone lost in sin. Isaiah 59:1 states, *“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”*

So why don’t we have our prayers answered? Is God stingy or biased? Why do some prayers get answered and others do not? If we pray for a million dollars, will we receive it? If we pray for a new car next month, will we receive it? Will God give us anything we ask for? Does God give upon demand to whoever should ask? Have we ever asked something of God and not received it? Or should I say, *how many times* have we not received what we have asked? Let us look at 1 John 3:22 for our first answer.

*“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”*

This is the first place to look when we are going to the Lord in prayer, our own backyard. Have we been keeping the commandments? Has there been any lying or envy in our hearts? These things have to be confessed and put under the blood before we enter into effective prayer.

Psalms 66:18 says, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”*

The second part of the verse that you just read in 1 John 3 is even more convicting, *“...and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”* This goes beyond the basic Ten Commandments and into the spirit and attitude by which we live.

Has your attitude been pleasing to God as you obey? There may not be a direct commandment in the Bible about the television shows that you watch, but are they pleasing to God? Is the language, priorities, and dress on these shows pleasing to God? Would a party with worldly music and entertainment be pleasing to God—or would it be more pleasing to God to attend that midweek prayer meeting?

If we begin to look at our everyday activities in light of “Is this activity pleasing to God?,” then the Lord can help us into a new level of our walk with Him. Believe me, it can change your life. You will find victory over any disinterest that you have had in spiritual things, and you will see your prayers beginning to be answered. God will begin to show you more things to do which are pleasing to Him, and there will be great joy in doing those things.

The Scriptures also teach us that we must be a person of faith to receive answers to prayer. *“And the prayer of faith shall save the sick...”* (James 5:15). *“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them”* (Mark 11:24). You must believe that you will receive them. Ask the Lord for faith to believe. Often review your answers to prayer both in and out of the Scripture. Don’t dwell on the complexities of the problem. Spend time with God, and you will learn of His power and His desire to answer every difficult prayer. This will help to increase your faith.

In Luke 18:10–14, what spirit mentioned was not pleasing to God and hindered the prayer of the Pharisee who kept all the commandments?

Begin to list activities or attitudes that you may have formerly thought the Bible was neutral on, but now you realize are not pleasing to God:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In 1 Chronicles. 5:20, what spirit was pleasing to God and gave God reason to answer their prayer?

How about Matthew 6:25–34?

## NOTES

## EAT BREAD

Begin each day with eating from His table—which is the Bible, the precious Word of God. Jesus prayed: *“Give us this day our daily bread”* (Matt. 6:6), and *“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst”* (John 6:35).

**DAILY COMMUNION:** Our daily bread is our daily communion in prayer and in reading the Bible. Even though the King James is our favorite, be sure to choose a translation that you can easily understand. Read the Bible like you would eat fish. When you eat fish, do you eat the bones? So don't worry if you don't understand everything you read. Just because you cannot understand everything is no excuse not to read from the Bible each day. It would be a good idea to pray and ask Jesus to help you have understanding when you read the Bible.

Just as we don't want to forget to eat our physical bread each day, you won't want to miss eating your spiritual bread each day. In fact, it is important that you begin the day with the Word of God. *“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee and will look up”* (Ps. 5:3).

We need directions from our “manual” each morning. The Bible will get your thoughts going in the right direction from the very start. Yes, reading the Bible only at night is better than not at all, but by that time, we have already spent a whole day without being tuned up by the Word. The Bible has a restraining quality for us: *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”* (Ps. 119:11). Getting the Word in our hearts will help us make godly choices. It will give us wisdom and understanding in the choices we face each day, *“...it giveth understanding unto the simple”* (Ps. 119:130).

**PRAYER IS WARFARE:** How did you do this past week in prayer? Was it difficult to find the time to pray everyday? *“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak”* (Mark 14:38). I'm sure you really wanted to be more consistent this week, but...well, was flesh weak?

In Romans 7:23, it says, *“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”* Warring...in me? Yes, it's time to wake up to the fact that there is a great battle going on inside of you as a believer. This battle has far greater importance than any Star Wars battle. It is our flesh warring against the Spirit of God which lives within us. How the battle turns out may or may not affect what you have for lunch today, but it definitely will affect many things on this earth and beyond.

For example, remember how we said that God is waiting for your prayers in order to move on behalf of someone's salvation or someone's healing? Now, the flesh in us is only concerned about satisfying itself. So, why should the flesh want to get up ten or thirty minutes earlier to pray or read the Bible? Therefore, the work of the Kingdom is hindered when our flesh wins a battle. Not only is the flesh against the Spirit of God, but the devil and all his forces are, too. *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Eph. 6:12).

This verse says we are not wrestling against the people around us, but against evil spiritual powers. Now you know you are really up against some opposition when you try to get into God's will by reading your Bible each morning.

**BE AN OVERCOMER:** Okay, now you know there is a battle. How do we fight and win against the flesh and the rulers of darkness? It is a big assignment, but the good news is that you already have taken a step by recognizing that there are forces working against you.

**1)** *“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”* (2 John 5:5). Believing Jesus to be God and therefore Lord of your life will bring victory. This goes back to what we said in the “Who can Pray?” section. If we believe Jesus is truly Lord of our life, then we will apply ourselves to do what is pleasing to Him—not what is pleasing to the flesh. If we believe we have the right to choose whether to read our Bible each day or not, then we will easily decide not to read it when we don’t feel like it. Believing Jesus is Lord should spark a reaction within us that results in our submission to Him.

**2)** *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”* (Phil. 4:13). This is looking to Christ and believing that (as the son of God), He has the power to help us overcome. We don’t have to give in! Don’t be overwhelmed by the opposition.

**3)** *“And they overcome him (the accuser: Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony”* (Rev. 12:11). Another weapon we can use is the blood of Jesus. There are two parts here. Ask that the blood of Jesus would be applied to your heart and mind. Also, testify of God’s goodness to your friends and/or your church. This will strengthen you against the evil one. *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7b). “I resist you, Satan, in the name of Jesus,” is a good thing to say when the devil is telling you, “It’s not that important that you get up and read your Bible today.”

## ENTER INTO THY CLOSET

### Remove the Stones

Read John 8:1–11

#### Go and Sin No More

Verse 7b: *“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”*

Verse 11b: *“...go, and sin no more.”*

Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and scribes about THEIR sin, and to the adulterous woman about HER sin. Jesus will do the same with you. He will keep you ever conscious of the need in your heart for His blood and saving grace. This will keep you in humility. It will keep you dependent on Him to help you every step of the way. As soon as you clear out the bad television programs, He will begin to deal with you about the next thing—maybe consistency in taking out the kitchen trash. As long as you walk in the Spirit, He will continue to refine and purify you. It is a lifelong process. In fact, be wary if the Lord hasn't shown you a need of your heart for a long time. It may be time to pray for cleansing from a complacent spirit and to ask the Lord for renewed fellowship with Him.

On the other hand, don't allow your prayers to be only focused on yourself. Lift the need in your heart to the Lord, and go on from there... and sin no more! There will be needs outside of yourself that the Spirit wants you to pray for. It wasn't that Jesus didn't want the Pharisees to notice when someone was in adultery. He just wanted to be sure they had the right motive and that they worked with people out of love and concern for their souls. The Holy Spirit may show you someone who needs prayer for salvation or for an angry spirit. This is not to be talked about with others. Only talk about it to Jesus. You may pray for the Lord to work in their hearts, but you must also remember to pray with a humble spirit, ever mindful of your own needs.

## Practicing Prayer

List any experiences you have had in your prayer closet?

Can you increase your time spent in prayer in the next 7 days? Start with increasing it 10 minutes. Use a hymnal or Psalm to help you in praise for a few minutes.

Today, begin a prayer diary. Write down prayers and praises below. You can review your diary often to see how prayer was answered and to remind you of prayers that still need to be prayed.

### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## STEP 9

### ENTER INTO THY CLOSET

#### Faith Is the Victory

Read John 9:1–12

##### The Man Born Blind

Verse 3: *“Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”*

The disciples are wondering whose sin caused this man to be blind. Jesus answers that it was not a result of sin...it was all in God's design! God had a plan to glorify Jesus by permitting this man to be blind and to have him cross paths with Jesus. So, basically, the man's blindness wasn't so much a handicap as an opportunity!

What a way to look at obstacles and problems! So, you have a big test tomorrow. Could it be an opportunity to exercise prayer? You and your best friend are not getting along so well? Look at it as an opportunity for Christ to be glorified through your obedience to pray! Your youth group needs to get serious about Christ? Jesus can do it and wants to do it.

A praying Christian can have a very positive attitude in the midst of trials. Not because he is blind to the problems, but because he knows the power in prayer. Think of Joni Eareckson Tada. Is Christ not much more glorified through her handicap than He would have been had she not had a paralyzing accident?

Your weaknesses and problems may seem only to cause you grief. I challenge you to give them to Christ and pray that He could be glorified through them. He knows the way it can be done!

### Practicing Prayer

Try standing today during your few minutes of praise. Lift your hands to the Lord in worship (Ps. 134:2).

Continue in your 10 minutes or more of prayer to the Lord, recording in your prayer diary your prayers.

List some obstacles/problems in your life which could be opportunities for answers to prayer.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## ENTER INTO THY CLOSET

### Prayer Is Listening

Read John 10:1–18

#### My Sheep Hear My Voice

Verse 4: *“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.”*

In Israel, the shepherd doesn’t drive the sheep; he leads them. We must follow Jesus and not expect Him to drive us where He wants us to go. He expects us to be attentive—listening—to His voice. This makes getting quiet before God all the more important.

You may have a goal of being a wealthy businessman, a successful athlete or a famous musician. There are many good occupations that you can aim for, but where is Jesus leading you? It would be easy to begin to pursue your interests and abilities on your own. This would seem logical to the natural mind. However, it could be that God has a higher plan for you!

Usually, the first time Jesus speaks to you is when He is calling you to salvation: *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice...”* (Rev. 3:20). So, if you are born again, you have already heard God’s voice! It could be that a few minutes after Jesus came into your heart, He spoke to you softly in your heart again, encouraging you to testify to someone about your salvation, or to make things right with someone. Jesus will speak to us more often than we realize. He could ask us to pray for someone or to pick up a piece of paper off the floor or to do the dishes for Mom.

His voice is very quiet and is easy to brush over if we are not careful. Listen today for the still, small voice of God in your heart!

## Practicing Prayer

Yesterday, you praised the Lord out loud with your hands raised. List here how that affected your praise time.

Today, praise the Lord in the position you choose, but lift your petitions while standing or pacing the floor.

### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## STEP 11

### ENTER INTO THY CLOSET

#### Suffering with Christ

Read John 11:14–45

##### Lazarus Raised from the Dead

Verse 38a: *“Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave.”*

Verse 57: *“Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.”*

Jesus experienced sorrow on His way to performing the miracle. In verse 38, Jesus is groaning within Himself because of the lack of belief of the people. You would think that after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, there would have been much more belief and support for Jesus and His ministry. Not so! At the end of the chapter, we see the Jewish leaders trying all the harder to capture Jesus.

You will find the same sort of fan club as you begin to pray and follow the voice of Jesus. Don't be discouraged when others don't understand what you are doing! Even when your prayers are answered for someone's salvation, healing or deliverance, you may find doubt and skepticism from those around you. These are simply the sufferings we must go through with Christ: *“It is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake”* (Phil. 1:29). Part of the benefit of being misunderstood by man is that it will help us to see if we are praying and obeying to please God or to look good in others' eyes.

Jesus will provide others who can rejoice with you as He sees you need it. He will also help you to rejoice when you face opposition. Keep your eyes on Jesus and He will carry you through in victory!

### Practicing Prayer

What affect did standing or pacing have on your time of petition yesterday?

Today, in your prayer diary, write a prayer asking the Lord to take away the “man-pleasing” spirit within you and to help you to seek to please God only.

#### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## ENTER INTO THY CLOSET

### Serving in Prayer

Read John 12:1–9

Verse 3: *“Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.”*

What a sacrifice of love! One translation states that the ointment was worth one year’s wages! That could be around \$30,000 in this day and age. You can just imagine Judas going bug-eyed over that kind of cash being poured out on someone’s feet! He then blurts out that surely this ointment could have been sold and given to the poor. This is Jesus’ reply: *“For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always”* (v. 5). He was saying that Mary knew where the immediate need was—in ministering to and loving Jesus who was soon to die. Jesus preached compassion for the poor, but, at this time, it wasn’t the priority.

In our day, we are seeing a great increase of church people reaching out to the poor, whether it be the homeless in America’s cities or the mission trips to the homeless and hungry in other countries. This is right for the body of Christ to have a heart of compassion to meet these needs. But, do we ever overlook ministering to a more immediate need—the ones Jesus has placed over us as pastors? Much virtue goes out of our pastors on a daily basis as they minister to others—yet they always must have the appearance of being on top of things. There are burdens and cares that they pick up from many situations. Do you think that some ointment of love would help to lift and refresh them in their work? A card of sincere appreciation, some money to go out to eat on, mowing their grass or washing their car would do more for their spirits than you could imagine! Pray for God’s guidance in serving your pastor, the servant of God, on a regular basis. There are blessings for those who take care of God’s servants (Mark 9:42).

## Practicing Prayer

List ideas here of things you could do for your pastor in the next week or two (do not demand any of his time in exchange for your service):

Your pastor has a vision for your church. You can assist him spiritually by asking him how you can help him pray for his vision to be fulfilled:

Spend a few minutes in praise, and then pray for your pastor and for the petitions that are on your heart .

### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## STEP 13

### ENTER INTO THY CLOSET

#### Power in the Blood

Read John 13:1–17

##### Love One another

Verse 14: *“If I then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.”*

Verse 17: *“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”*

Whenever you get a group of people together, there is very likely to be some back–stabbing or bad–mouthing going on sooner or later. Think about your basketball or football team, your cheerleading team or, heaven forbid, your youth, or homeschool group! The same kind of jostling for top position was going on with the disciples now and then. Jesus settled the issue in this chapter by teaching the disciples that they must be a servant to one another, whether they were of higher rank or not. In verse 34, He says, *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you...”* This is the way to happiness!

Now, we could talk about the good deeds that you could do for others, and that would be a fine thing to do. But we are going to talk about the attitude of your heart toward your teammates, coaches, youth pastor and parents. Is there murmuring against them? Do you think of things like: “They think they are so good!” and “My mom and dad don’t understand anything!” These comments show there is a murmuring, unloving spirit in our hearts. Our prayers cannot be heard until we repent and ask Jesus to forgive us for a murmuring spirit. What will follow our confession? *“Happy are ye if ye do them”!* Yes, happiness will follow. Once our heart attitude is right, the good deeds for one another will follow naturally.

### Practicing Prayer

Spend a few quiet moments asking the Lord to forgive you for murmuring. Ask Him to cleanse the murmuring and complaining spirit out of you. Ask the Holy Spirit if you should personally ask any of the individuals you have criticized for forgiveness.

Praise the Lord for His cleansing! Spend a few moments more praising the Lord for who He is. Use whatever position helps you focus best.

For prayer today, try praying your petitions in a kneeling position. Remember to ask that Christ’s love would be evident in your heart attitude. Pray for a greater unity within your youth group and family. Remember, unity begins with a cleansing in the heart.

#### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## ENTER INTO THY CLOSET

### Asking in Jesus' Name

Read John 14:1–21

Verse 12a: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me..."*

Verse 13: *"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."*

Jesus states here that **WHATEVER** we ask in His name, He will do it! Is He talking to you, too...or just the disciples? Verse 12 tells us that He is talking to those that believe on Him. It may be easy to glibly say, "Sure, I believe in Christ." But what does it mean to really believe in someone? If you really believe in your doctor, will you take what he says seriously? If you really believe your coach is knowledgeable in basketball, will you do what he instructs you to do? To believe in Christ will also lead us to put Him where He belongs in our lives—**FIRST**—in every word and action.

Another point that is easy to miss in these verses is that we must ask in Jesus' name. In verse 6, Jesus says, *"no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* With all of the eastern religions entering our culture, this is a good point to remember. There is no other way to reach the Father and have our prayers answered (or to enter Heaven) except through Jesus Christ.

As we are true disciples and as we ask in Jesus' name, we can have faith that our Heavenly Father will answer prayer. Several times in this chapter, Jesus tells His disciples not to let their hearts be troubled. They were reassured that they had the power in prayer and the help of the Holy Spirit to overcome whatever difficulties would come their way. Faith is believing in that which cannot be seen, or what does not seem possible. But doubt and discouragement are of the devil. Don't let your heart be troubled, but ask, believing in Jesus' name.

## Practicing Prayer

Who do you believe are your authorities?

Circle those behaviors which would indicate that Christ has authority over your life.

- Keeping the 10 commandments
- Being embarrassed to witness at school
- Faithful church attendance
- Catching up on lost sleep instead of having devotions
- Ignoring a social outcast
- Using tithe money to pay back a debt
- Supporting your youth pastor in word and action—in his presence as well as behind his back
- Leaving your circle of friends to spend time with someone new at school or church
- Enjoying music with bad language

Did kneeling in prayer help or hinder your prayer time yesterday?

Use Psalms 149 and 150 as your praise for today. After a few moments of quiet listening, lift the petitions that you may have. Remember to do it in Jesus' name!

### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## Section Three

### CLEAN THE TABLE Group/Individual Study

How did it go last week with the assignment to read the Bible? Were you faithful to read steps 8–14? If not, why not?

List your excuses here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

It isn't always easy to pray and to read the Bible—as you can see. But it is a must and a necessity if you want to grow. "...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..." (2 Pet. 3:18). Being born-again is great and wonderful, but to be a mature saint and soldier of Jesus Christ, you will need to stop making excuses.

You can have a feast, but there is always time to clean up. *"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully"* (Ps. 24:4).

Are your hands clean? What have your eyes read today? You need to keep your heart right toward God. Before you pray, be sure you are in right standing with the Lord! Clear your mind, and ask the Holy Spirit to show you anything in your heart that may have not been pleasing to Him.

Sin in our lives can hinder our prayers. It is important to acknowledge your unworthiness and lostness before the Lord, but it is equally important to acknowledge your faith in Jesus' blood to cover all your confessed sin and to put you in right standing with Christ.

### PRAISE THE LORD

Besides cleaning up the table, we need to praise the Lord with thanksgiving for all the wonderful things He has done. Here you are entering into prayer with the Creator of all things; you ask Him to bless your day and begin to mention some needs that you know of, when all of a sudden you find that there doesn't seem to be anything else to pray about. All you can think about is what's going to happen later today, or you begin to wonder if you packed your pencil in your backpack after you used it to clean your sister's hair out of the sink drain last night. Is this lack of focus still praying? Don't worry, this is a common struggle. I haven't heard anyone claim that they find it easy to keep focused. Let's consider how praise can keep a focused mind on God.

Remember, you are talking to the one and only true GOD. Focus on Him while you're praying. Reading a Psalm or hymn of praise beforehand can help draw your mind into a heavenly perspective. Beginning with praise in your prayer times lifts your spirits and helps you to know that you are before a God that can do anything. It also lets God know that you're not just coming for Him to meet your needs, but you are coming to worship Him first. In your prayer, you can keep returning to praise between petitions, reminding yourself of who it is exactly that you have audience with!

## Praise the Lord

**EXPERIMENT:** Below are a couple choices. Whatever you pick, be sure not to forget to **EAT SOME BREAD** and to **CLEAN THE TABLE** before you **PRAISE THE LORD!**

**Experiment #1:** Think of a prayer need. Start dwelling on how awful and impossible the situation is. NOW, try to get into prayer! Like wearing lead boots, isn't it? The situations of life can be too overwhelming for us. Then read Psalm 103. Read it aloud, concentrating on the goodness of our God. After reading it, do you feel a fresh appreciation for our Lord?

**Experiment #2:** Find a hymnal. Look up "I Sing the Almighty Power of God." Read through the words, rejoicing in the wonders of nature. Now, try to pray...you will be filled with an overwhelming wonder and knowledge of the greatness of God, His love and omnipotence! This will increase your faith as you pray.

## PETITIONS

Now that you're in a spirit of praise and appreciation for the One you're praying to, let's look to the Holy Spirit to guide us into the petitions. The key to answered prayer is praying the petitions that GOD wants lifted to the throne. It isn't our job to tell God what He ought or ought not to do in order to save His reputation. Be open to the Spirit telling you what He wants prayer for—He is waiting for us to ask, and is willing to give us good gifts: *"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"* (Matt. 7:9–11).

God is more than willing to give us our request. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you. Be quiet before the Lord, and ask that He will bring to mind the needs that should be prayed for. Then really focus your mind and heart on what you are praying. Remember that you are fighting a spiritual battle against the devil and his powers. This is not child's play—we're dealing with eternal issues. Romans 15:30 says, *"strive together with me in your prayers."* This indicates a pressing into prayer and a conflict or battle that we enter into in prayer. It is not something to be too nonchalant about. This isn't a battle we fight in the flesh, but it does mean we put some effort into our praying. You will find as you ask the petitions the Holy Spirit lays on your heart and as you focus intently on the needs, you will gradually find more and more words to express your requests, and you won't be tempted to let your mind wander so badly.

**PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE:** Next time you have a time of prayer, begin with praise, then become quiet and ask the Lord to bring to your mind the needs that are on His heart. Listening to the Lord may be more important than talking to Him. As needs come to your heart, begin to pray, putting your heart into it. Be as specific in your prayers as you can. Praying softly out loud can also help us to be attentive. Give yourself time and have patience. Learning how to pray is a process. Remember that Christianity is not a push–button lifestyle. As you continue to practice praying, you will find that you enjoy prayer more and more, and your faith will begin to grow.

**ASSIGNMENT:** Pray specifically for your pastor. Use the Scripture, *"Finally brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified even as it is with you"* (2 Tim. 3:1). You will know you are praying the petition God wants because He has asked in His Word that we pray it! Use this Scripture in your prayers for your pastor. You could put it in your own words, i.e. "Lord, help my pastor(s) to have the freedom he needs to have in preaching your Word. May our church bring more glory to You by our response to the words that we hear." You could go on and ask that certain spirits of pride or complacency would be removed. Again, ask the Holy Spirit to help you. Then watch in your services to see how God will answer, and record it in your diary.

## STEP 15

### CLEAN THE TABLE

#### Purging by the Spirit

Read John 15:1–14

Verses 2–3: *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”*

A good way to illustrate what these verses are saying is how a coach might handle his softball team. From the beginning of the season, if there is any player who is not really interested in the game nor putting any effort into it, the coach could cut him/her off of the team. However, if you show you are serious about the game, then you are kept on the team and the coach will start working on your weak spots...in other words, start purging you. “That was a lousy pitch! Why don’t you throw the way I told you?” or “You need to focus on that ball or you’re never going to amount to anything in softball!” might be “purging” comments that you will hear.

Can you handle that kind of criticism? If we are too easily offended by correction we receive, then we will not be able to improve our playing skills! The same goes for the Kingdom of God. If we have our hearts in the game, and we are beginning to produce fruit, there will be some constructive criticism coming our way. Some of it will hurt! The Lord may bring shame or disappointment our way. He could correct us through our teacher or our parents. But be encouraged! This correction should tell us that Jesus thinks we are worth the effort of perfecting and refining! God has a plan for you, and He needs to make a few adjustments to get you ready for that plan. Notice, it says in verse 3 that we are clean through the words of Christ. Study God’s Word and heed His Word. It will take the things out of you that are preventing you from bearing all the fruit that God wishes you to bear.

### Practicing Prayer

Signs that you are bearing fruit could be:

A smile when things are difficult  
Homework done properly  
Souls saved  
Burden for the sick

If fruit trees are not purged (pruned), they will bear smaller and less fruit. It is a false concept that those who love us will always give us our way.

Pray today that you will be able to rejoice when trials come your way.

Pray for a heart full of peace, not an offended heart, when correction comes your way. *“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them”* (Ps. 119:165).

#### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## PETITIONS

### Weeping in Prayer

Read John 16:19–33

Verses 20–21 *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.”*

Have you ever heard the statement, “Ignorance is bliss,” meaning, the less you know about some situations, the happier you are? Before you commit yourself to faithfulness in prayer, you may not notice a lot of prayer needs around you. Every once in a while, something will really cause concern, but for the most part, you may think things are going pretty well. BUT, once we really make ourselves available to God in prayer, He will begin to show us things that He wants us to pray for. You may find yourself aware of spiritual needs that you had never noticed before. The Holy Spirit isn’t showing you these things for you to worry about or to complain about to others. The Holy Spirit wants you to pray about them in your prayer closet.

At times, there may even be a heaviness pressing you down in your spirit for no apparent reason. If you have confessed all sin in your life, then you may be carrying a burden for prayer in an unknown area. The best thing you can do is to start by praising the Lord. Pray over various situations you know about, and if you don’t receive help there, then just say, “Jesus, you know all about it. Please take care of it.” Keep lifting it to Him periodically as the heaviness remains. These are part of the inner sorrows we bear with Christ. It is a privilege to pray, and we know that joy will come as we are faithful.

## Practicing Prayer

The needs that the Holy Spirit shows me, I commit to lifting them in prayer. I will consider it a privilege to bear the sorrows He gives me and endeavor to do it with joy. I will do my best to not try to solve them in my own strength, nor share them with others.

Signed:

Find a hymnal for praise today. Locate “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing.” Read it to the Lord, directing the words of praise directly to Him. Continue in the petitions you have for today.

Reminder: Are you praying and praising in the position that keeps you most attentive?

### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

# STEP 17

## PETITIONS

### Praying for the Disciples

Read John 17:9–26

Verse 9: *“I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.”*

What if you had a leader of a club who was more interested in recruiting more new members than in giving his energy and time to those who were already members? I think the club wouldn't grow too well because the members of the club would be so unhappy that they would discourage any new members the leader brought in. However, if the leader put his energies into making the club the very best organization that it could be, don't you think that others would naturally want to be a part of it?

Jesus knew that He needed to pray for His disciples at this point of His ministry. If they could fulfill what they were called to do—becoming Christ-like—then the Holy Spirit could use them to draw in the lost. Jesus knew that they needed the most prayer at this time. They would not be able to keep themselves from evil (v. 15) or become one with other disciples (v. 21) unless they had much prayer.

The point is: Don't forget to pray for other disciples that they would remain faithful! If the disciples are faithful, then Jesus will be lifted up, and the lost will be drawn in! *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”* (John 12:32).

Make it a priority to pray for the disciples in your church, school, work and in your family. Do not take it for granted that they will always have the strength to do the right thing. Uphold them in prayer. We, as Christ's followers, are keys to bringing in the lost.

## Practicing Prayer

Make a list of disciples (followers of Jesus) that you can pray for. If possible, obtain a list of people who attend your church, and pray for five or six of them each day.

Disciples I know...

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Today, take the first person on the above list and begin to praise the Lord for the blessing this person is to you and for the specific gifts that they have (kindness, helpfulness, generosity, servanthood...etc.). Go through the rest of your list this way.

Next, begin again with the first person and pray for them. Here are some suggested areas to help you pray for others (there are many more than this:

- Faithfulness in daily prayer and Bible reading
- Encouragement
- Courage to witness
- Wisdom in making decisions
- Healing in the body
- A holy walk—deliverance from temptation
- Family relationships

### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## PRAISE THE LORD

### Dealing with Disappointments

Read John 18:19–40

In this text, Jesus has been arrested, questioned by Pilate, and scourged. Peter has denied the Lord three times. If you were there, wouldn't you be tempted to think, "Certainly, this isn't the will of God!" Yes, it was. Because of the fall of man, this tragedy had to occur.

There will be times that you will pray for things in a certain way—a way that seems to fill the Biblical pattern to the best of your knowledge, and in the end, it seems things work out in tragedy. Do not give up praying or having faith! Begin to pray that the Lord will be glorified through the disappointment. Many times, I have heard of someone's death turning one or more unsaved persons to salvation. There are men who have lost their jobs, only to find that God had another plan right around the corner. High school graduates have been rejected from the college of their dreams. Later, they see God using that disappointment to get them to a college where He had a spouse or other special design for them.

The more time we spend with God, the more we will understand Him. But we will never know everything in His plan. The wonderful thing is that we don't need to! We can learn to trust God to take care of us and all those we hold dear...in His way and in His time as we pray.

*"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!"* (Rom. 11:33).

## Practicing Prayer

Are there things you have given up praying for? Are there situations that may have caused you to be bitter toward God because they didn't work out in a "picture-perfect" (unfallen world) way? Confess these to the Lord, and lay them on the altar. Begin anew, praying that the Lord will work against all odds and be glorified despite or through tragic situations.

Praise the Lord through a hymn or Psalm today. Spend a few moments in quiet, listening with your heart for any instruction from the Holy Spirit.

### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## STEP 19

### PRAISE THE LORD

#### Suffering Persecution

Read John 19:1–42

Verse 11: *“Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.”*

Yesterday, we discussed how there are tragedies in our lives that happen because we live in a fallen world, but God can use them for His glory as we hold on in faith. Today, we see from this verse that Jesus didn't even fear the one who could sentence Him to death because He knew He was under God's protection. God's protection will only let in the tragedies that He will help us through.

Whom or what do you fear? What motivates you to say what you say or do what you do? Jesus' only motivation was to please God. He knew that sometimes what He said may offend a Jew. He said it anyway because He knew He needed to be pleasing God. He knew that His actions would cause people to doubt that He was the son of God (eating with sinners or healing on the Sabbath). He did it anyway because it was what God wanted Him to do. His goal was not to save His own skin or His own reputation! How are many American Christians motivated today? How carefully do we twist words as to be pleasing to the ears that are listening? When was the last time you did something in obedience to God that you knew ahead of time would cause you a little heat from others?

If we will please God, He will take the heat with us just as He was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace. If we please man, we will be at man's mercy. Where would you rather be when you come to the throne in prayer?

### Practicing Prayer

Repent from any fear of man today. Ask the Lord to help you to have righteous motives in all you say and do. Don't pray for rashness, but for courage to do what God wants, even if it may be displeasing to man.

Praise!

Pray for missionaries today that are in places where they know they could be persecuted for the name of Christ. If you know some by name, pray for them by name. Here are some countries where Christians are persecuted. Pray for the missionaries, and believers there.

China  
Cuba  
Cambodia  
North Korea  
Saudi Arabia  
Afghanistan  
Pakistan  
Indonesia  
Sudan

Pray their faith would remain strong and all their needs be provided for. Pray they will win souls for Christ and have all the fellowship they need. Pray for their families to be strengthened and provided for.

#### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## PRAISE THE LORD

### Praying in the Spirit

Read John 20:1–31

Verse 22: *“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”*

The disciples received the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, when Jesus breathed upon them. What did they have that they had not had before? What treasure did they receive when they received the Holy Spirit? What will it do for YOU in prayer?

Up to that time, no one had had the very Spirit of the Creator of the Universe living within them. As for the prophets of old, they would hear God telling them what to do, and God would be with them, but God did not give them His Spirit to actually live within them!

The Spirit will guide us into all truth and show us what is to come (John 16:13). This should give us confidence that He will help us to know how to pray! The Spirit will also intercede for us when it seems like we just can't find the right words to pray for a particular situation (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit can bring life into words of truth, causing them to prick the hearts of others (John 6:63). The Spirit will also confirm in our hearts when we hear the truth that it truly is truth (1 John 5:6). This will either confirm that we are doing the right thing or convict us to make corrections in our lives.

The Spirit of God will dwell in a washed by–the–blood, obedient heart. We can't get far with the Lord without His Spirit. Your prayers will be directed in the right way when you depend on the Holy Spirit to guide you.

## Practicing Prayer

Praise the Lord today for the gift of His Holy Spirit!

Sing softly this song to the Lord.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.  
 Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.  
 Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.  
 Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.  
 (Daniel Iverson)

It is good to be consistent in praying for certain people each day or week. That is what a prayer list is good for. It is also good to be open to what the Holy Spirit may want you to pray for each day. A quiet, listening time will help you in this area. Practice each of these today.

For more in–depth study, look up “Spirit” with a capital ‘S’ in a concordance. There are many verses that will help you understand the role of the Spirit in our Christian walk.

### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## STEP 21

### PRAISE THE LORD

#### Bringing in the Catch

Read John 21:1–25

Verses 10– 11: *“Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.”*

One day there will be a judgment for each of us, and Jesus will ask us to show what we have done with our lives as He asked the disciples to show the fish they had caught (Rom. 2:5–10). They had caught so many fish they could hardly get them to shore! But this is only because they obeyed Jesus and cast their nets on the right side of the ship as He told them to.

The good news is that as you pray and follow the Spirit of the Lord, you will also have many great fish that you have brought in during your life on this earth! When you get to eternity, you will find out how many there really are. Your prayers for China may show a catch of lost souls who have been saved, or persecuted Christians who remained faithful because of your prayers. Your prayers for your pastor may be shown to have been what held him faithful through times of temptation. Your prayers for revival in America may show to have actually revived some key people in the Kingdom of God.

The money you made or the awards you received from men will not account for anything except dust. Your prayers, however, will be worth a value that will keep going on in eternity, and that is forever and ever and ever...

Now that's time well invested!

### Practicing Prayer

List here the things that you have learned during this study. Leaf back through this booklet, if necessary, to give you ideas.

Congratulations! You have been faithful to pray and read your Bible for three weeks now! Continue the habit! There are many fish to be caught in God's Kingdom. Continue to:

- Read
- Pray
- Witness
- Obey the Holy Spirit
- Attend church regularly

These are the five, simple keys to consistent spiritual victory!

#### Prayer Diary

Date:

My prayer request:

Answers received:

## **YES, YOU CAN PRAY!**

Whenever you need a boost or if you need to review, just return to: STEPS TO FAITH. Review each step of faith beginning with: WHY PRAY.

Sometimes we get lax in our habits, and sometimes we are just plain forgetful. Review is important! For example, you may need to review PRAISE THE LORD (page 24) more than once. Praising God doesn't come naturally, it takes practice.

As you spend time alone with God, being sure to listen as well as ask. As you continue in regular times of prayer, you will find you are getting to know the mind of Christ in the areas of need you are praying for. You are entering into a realm that is not of this earth. It will be filled with surprises and insights that will delight you. This realm, the Kingdom of God, will become an anchor to you in the midst of any, yes any, storm. Your prayers will be answered, even though in sometimes unpredictable ways. You will be climbing...the Steps to Faith.