

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, August 3 - Read Matthew 6:6 & 7:7 Prayer is an inexhaustible topic, and no matter how often we hear sermons or read books on prayer, we can always glean something new on this subject. When one takes the posture of prayer it is a sign of great humility because it is in this act we recognize there is someone greater than us, and we need his help. Prayer is so much more than just asking God to do stuff for us, to bless us, to open doors for us, and nothing is wrong with asking God we are encouraged by Jesus to ask and keep on asking. (Matthew 7:7). But prayer is the actual practice of the presence of God, this statement gives prayer so much more meaning because so often we pray on the go, or we are rushing to catch the seven o'clock headlines on the news, or we had a long day, and we just want to get to bed early. No matter what the reason, we all have experienced rushing prayer. Practicing the presence of God means I must take time to sit, pushing aside everything else, ready to engage in conversation giving God my full attention. Sometimes I find it easier to understand spiritual things by comparing them to the natural. So if we are talking about practicing someone's presence, we can look at the relationship between a husband and wife. Often I am in the same room with my husband, lying on the same bed, and he is catching up on emails, and I am reading; we are in each other's presence, but we are not practicing each other's presence. But if we put everything aside and we engage in conversation, we then practice each other's presence. So too with prayer, we can talk to God but all the while our minds and hearts are no way connected to him. I know this feeling in my times of on-purpose prayer my mind becomes the most bombarded with my to-do list. I have learned over the years not to view prayer as a chore or work, but as the act of practicing God's presence, therefore prayer has become more of a delight for me. If you struggle with prayer or are intimidated because you don't have all the right words, or you run out of things to pray about I want to encourage you to start off slowly by coming into a quiet place with some soft worship music, this will help you sense God's presence and then you can share your heart in your own words, and that will lead you to great times of prayer.

"Prayer is not learned in a classroom but in the closet." **E. M. Bounds**

Tuesday, August 4 - Read Matthew 6:8-10 As we spend time in God's presence, we catch his heart. Can you remember the time you dated? Do you remember the feelings of awe and wonder, the anticipation of spending time with the person and the sorrow to leave; time just was not enough. But one of the most important things about spending time with the person you love is the attention you pay to them while they share what's in their heart with you. The disciples spent a lot of time with Jesus and the time caused them to want to know more. They had seen him do many miracles and wonders, they had seen him spend countless hours in prayer, and so they wanted to tap into his heart, and they asked Jesus to teach them to pray - "Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:8-10 (NIV) Jesus then ventured out to give them the model of prayer that would revolutionize not only their lives but ours also; it is a prayer we are still praying over two thousand years later - Heaven Come! I find it interesting that Jesus did not teach the disciples to pray for themselves or their needs first, but the priority of the prayer was that God's name would forever be kept Holy and then for God's domain to reach ours - "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name," (Matthew 6:9 NIV). How powerful is that? So often we approach prayer for our needs only, but true prayer pushes past our agendas to get to the heart of the King. I know there are all types of prayers and at different times in our lives we may have different needs, and that may drive the direction of our prayers, but as a believer growing and maturing in the Lord, our prayers now should always be shaped by the priority of what is on God's heart. You may ask the question, "Well if I don't pray for my needs how will they be met?" But just before Jesus introduced the model prayer to his disciples, he reminded them their heavenly Father knows what they have need of even before they ask Him. "Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." (Matthew 6:8-10 NIV). God wants us to know that he cares about our needs like an earthly parent cares for their children, so our requirements need not be the priority on our prayer list. But desiring God's name and kingdom to reach earth is by far the most excellent prayer we could ever pray. If you have never prayed this way before, today I want to encourage you to take just a few minutes and ask God to share his heart with you so you can bring heaven to earth.

"We must begin to believe that God, in the mystery of prayer, has entrusted us with a force that can move the Heavenly world, and can bring its power down to earth." **Andrew Murray**

Wednesday, August 5 - Read Matthew 26:40-41, Luke 22:31-32, Ephesians 6:10-12 & Ephesians 6:18 We all know there are wars and rumors of wars raging wild across the earth because the news and social media give it more than enough coverage, yet when a spiritual battle comes up we have a hard time believing this is real. But Jesus reminds us to be mindful of the war raging. He said, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41 AMP). From this statement, we can recognize that the war is mostly internal for the believer. Jesus made this statement the night he was about to be taken away to be crucified; he had just completed the Passover meal with his disciples, and he took a few disciples to the garden for support in prayer because he knew what was about to befall him. After a while of praying Jesus came back and saw the disciples sleeping, and he said, "Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter." (Matthew 26:40). Jesus was emphasizing the importance of prayer in this on-going battle is to keep the faith. The faith to believe he is who he says he is and he will do what he says he will do, is the biggest struggle we all face. When money is running low, when our children are going off the righteous path after we have done everything to teach them God's ways, when sickness and pain are wreaking havoc in our bodies and worries seem to be the bed we lie in every night, when our relationships are plagued with disloyalty and cheating, when the business or ministry have taken the best years of our lives, and it still seems to go under, when there is alcohol and abuse in our homes trust me it takes a real fight to still believe God and his word. But thank God for prayer because it is the one comfort we have knowing that through it all, through the raging winds and storms of life and through the struggle and hardships we can get with other saints and send up a prayer to God and know that he hears and he will answer. Jesus shared with the Apostle Peter the plan the enemy had for his life, Jesus didn't hold back in letting him know the enemy was after him but he also gave Peter the solution to the problem. "Simon, Simon (Peter), listen! Satan has demanded permission to sift [all of] you like grain; but I have prayed [especially] for you [Peter], that your faith [and confidence in Me] may not fail; and you, once you have turned back again [to Me], strengthen and support your brothers [in the faith]." (Luke 22:31-32 AMP). The plan of the enemy has been the same through the ages to get us to doubt God, and his word and the strategy remains the same still today; watch and pray!

"If you are strangers to prayer you are strangers to power" - Billy Sunday.

Thursday, August 6 - Read Daniel 6:1-10 & Daniel 10:1-14 Have you ever felt like you have been praying and the answers are not forthcoming? It seems like the heavens are shut up, and the Lord has fallen asleep on you, and no matter how hard you try to stay in faith, the fear of the answer not coming takes hold of your heart and mind. Well, you are not alone, there are times in our lives when we all feel like we are in the desert, but there are answers to press in for even if it takes a while. The prophet Daniel in the bible is a great example on persevering prayer, and he had a disciplined prayer life; three times a day Daniel would bow and pray whether things were good or bad in his life. (Daniel 6:10) Daniel didn't have life easy, he was taken away into captivity, forced to live under a new name and religious ways, and he was thrown into a lion's den because he would not conform to the culture of his day, yet, he never moved away from the discipline of prayer. Because of his obedience to God, he was entrusted with visions of the future, though the visions were dreadful he purposed to seek God for understanding through prayer and fasting. Daniel persevered for three weeks in constant searching for understanding. Sometimes we buy into a lie that if we continue to pray for an answer for a long period we are repetitious and we stop short. I've come to understand there are just some things we must keep on praying for, e.g., unsaved loved ones, healing in bodies and marriages, laws and legislation that represents the kingdom of God, and this is just a few. *Daniel had an encounter with an angel at the end of his fast, and the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them."* (Daniel 10:12 NIV). Isn't that amazing? After three weeks of prayer, the answer finally came, but I want you to pay close attention to the verse above, "Since the first day." From the first day, Daniel set out to pray the angel was sent with the answer but was held up by an evil force that kept the answer from coming. Daniel persevered in prayer, and it strengthened the angel to fight and eventually break through with the answer. I want to encourage you today; please don't quit praying because your answer might be on the way!

On persevering prayer: "I look at a stone cutter hammering away at a rock a hundred times without so much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the 101st blow, it splits in two. I know it was not the one blow that did it, but all that had gone before." **Jacob August Riis**

Friday, August 7 - Read Luke 5:16, Luke 6:12, Acts 12:1-11, Revelation 5:6-8, Revelation 8:3-5 & John 14:12 I am so thankful for the simplicity of prayer that wrought great victories in impossible situations in our lives. Jesus, when teaching his disciples to pray was actually equipping them to access the courtroom of heaven, shatter spiritual glass ceilings, and enlist the help of the greatest angelic army to bring heaven to earth. The privilege of prayer is far greater than petitioning for our needs, but rather it is the positioning posture for miracles to invade our sphere of influence. Jesus never took prayer lightly, and he being the Son of God had set times of prayer daily, early mornings, and sometimes all night. His secluded times of prayer was his refueling port and gaining the heart of his father; what was on God's agenda for the day. If Jesus did not skip prayer how much more important it is for us to have set times of prayer also. any miracles were done through Jesus because he was committed to prayer. He healed everyone that came to him for healing, he raised the dead, he fed thousands of people with limited food, he walked on water, and he endured the crucifixion and death, and every miracle was preceded by prayer. Jesus said, Greater things we will do. (John 14:12) The Apostles walked in the measure of prayer just like Jesus did and they also saw great miracles in their lives. The Apostle Peter was imprisoned overnight, heavily guarded awaiting his trial the next day and the bible says, "So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him." (Acts 12:5 NIV). Because of the prayers of the saints, an angel was enabled to intervene and break Peter out of the prison cell. When we pray on earth the will and heart of God, it may seem like nothing is happening but according to the book of Revelation, our prayers are going up to heaven and is stored in golden bowls. (Revelation 5:8). King David had the revelation of prayer rising like incense before the Lord. (Psalm 141:2 NIV) Later on, in Revelation, we read about the angel mingling the incense and the prayers of the saints on the altar of fire, and the smoke went up before God. These scriptures show us that our prayers are not in vain or wasted, but they go up before God and Jesus who is our perfect intercessor, prays perfect prayers for us. I am praying as you are coming to the end of this plan that your whole view and mindset of prayer have changed, and every time you approach God's throne, you would remember that your prayer is being heard and the answer will arrive in due time.

Recap:

- . Prayer is the practice of the presence of God
- . Prayer brings God's desires from heaven to earth
- . Prayer is our winning weapon in the invisible war
- . Don't quit praying
- . Prayer opens the door for miracles

*"God shapes the world by prayer. The more prayer there is in the world, the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil..."***E.M. Bounds**

Adapted from: <http://hgmny.org/pastor-lisa-singh>