



PRAYER THAT WORKS

PRAYING THE SCRIPTURES

Study 4

Praying Scripture-

- Review last session's homework
- Prayerfully approaching Scripture
- Praying the prayers of Scripture
- Praying what we read
- Shaping the way you pray through Scripture

PRAYERFULLY APPROACHING SCRIPTURE

Which is most important to developing our spiritual growth as Christians- reading the Bible or praying? The answer is reading the Bible. But to do this effectively, it teaches us that it must be done *prayerfully*. One of the goals of daily reading God's Word and setting time aside to pray each day, is to be able to train our spiritual ears to hear God more clearly. Some Christians teach that hearing God is easy because when He talks it's unmistakable. But this type of thinking possibly commits the error of confusing *what God can do* with *what God actually does*. Of course God can speak to us in an unmistakable way. But the Scriptures reveal that God ordinarily speaks to His people very softly, gently, and quietly (note Job 26:14; 33:14). 'Quietly' does not mean *cryptically* though.

Praying The Scriptures

1. It's possible to read the Bible and miss what God is actually saying. Note how differently people heard things in John 12:28-29.
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Reading God's Word helps us to become familiar with the *voice* of God. By reading God's Word we learn not only what God has said, but the language God uses when He speaks. By "language" I don't mean "English" or "Hebrew", rather, I mean the sorts of things that God is *likely* to say. When you get to know someone, you come to know *the way* they speak. You learn their favourite expressions, the things they value, and the way they use word-pictures ('metaphors'). From the Scriptures we see that God does indeed speak to people. It seems that He most often 'speaks' through - dreams, visions, or revelations.

2. Some claim that if God speaks, He will do it *audibly*. But how does Exodus 33:11 *not* support this idea?
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Just as many of the Pharisees in the days of Jesus did not recognise the voice of God when Christ spoke, today there are many people who glance at God's Word and fail to hear God. If this is how you feel and you are sincerely reading God's Word with the intention of hearing from God, then there are some things that the Scriptures encourages us to pray regularly.

3. What do the Scriptures say is required for people to 'hear' what God is saying? (Matt. 11:15; Revelation 2:7)
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Praying The Scriptures

In John 5:39 Jesus teaches His reluctant audience that just because they know what the Scriptures say does not mean that they could recognise God's voice.

4. What did Christ have to do for His followers in order for them to understand the Scriptures according to Luke 24:45?

5. What is the prayer of the Psalmist in Psalm 119:18 and how can we adapt this prayer for us today?

If you are struggling to daily read God's Word, ask God to help you and pray that you might delight in it. Then approach Scripture prayerfully by asking God to give you 'eyes' to see what His Word says, and to 'hear' what His Word says, and a 'mind' to understand it.

6. Write your prayer here-

PRAYING THE PRAYERS OF SCRIPTURE

Most of the Psalms are prayers. Not all of them can be prayed by us though, because some of them are “*imprecatory*.” This big word means that the author of the Psalm is deeply upset and is venting his anger or frustration out in violent terms to God. This type of Psalm is not *endorsed* by God. But its inspired recording in Scripture shows that God understands human frustration. God is thus allowing the Psalmist to share his deepest feelings in prayer for the world to read.

But there are Psalms which cry out to God, and declare His greatness, offer Him complete surrender, and seek Him for provision. As we read through these types of Psalms we should consider whether we can use these Psalms to guide our own praying.

7. Consider Psalms 42 - 45. Is there anything in these Psalms which you could relate to and pray? Can you share which Psalm you could pray?

PRAYING WHAT WE READ

The Psalms are not the only prayers in Scripture. For example, the entire of Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians is actually a long prayer.

8. Have a glance at Ephesians and see if you can recognise the things that Paul is praying for them, which you could also pray for your church. Note four of these prayer points that your Bible Study Group has highlighted -

Praying The Scriptures

It's not just the prayers of Scripture that can be prayed. As you read the stories of the Bible consider pausing as you read and praying the positive lessons from the stories that you read. For example, you read how David refused to harm King Saul and you could pray that you could be forgiving and loyal even to those who may not care for you as they should, or even wish you ill. Or, you could be reading about Samson being enticed by Delilah and pray that God will keep you from yielding to temptation.

9. Can you think of a Bible passage that either has, or could, inspire a personal prayer from you?

10. What could you pray after reading Philippians 2:13-14?

SHAPING THE WAY YOU PRAY THROUGH SCRIPTURE

11. How might Psalm 40:8 shape the way you pray? (Consider also Psalm 143:10)

As we read the Biblical examples of those who mastered prayer, including Moses, David, Jesus, and Paul, we can be influenced by their examples. It is by becoming familiar with Scripture that we know how to pray more effectively.

Praying The Scriptures

12. What did Christ want His followers to especially know about prayer based on His comments in Luke 18:1?

13. According to Ephesians 3:20, how is God able to answer our prayers?

14. How should knowledge of Matthew 19:26 shape the way we pray? (Refer also to Matthew 6:8; 7:7; 18:19; 21:22)

There is a direct correlation to our knowledge of God's Word and the way we pray.

15. Consider Christ's words in John 15:7. What should be the relationship between our commitment to Scripture *and* prayer?

Your homework for our next Bible study meeting is to do the following-

1. Write down a prayer to share with your Bible Study Group the next time you meet that will sound outrageously hopeful of God doing the impossible for the good of those in your group.
2. Practise praying aloud with your family.
3. Begin to pray the prayers of Scriptures and come prepared to share with your group how this has changed the way you now pray.

Amen.