

Jesus' Church

g r o u p s t u d y



Lesson 6
The Prayer

this book belongs to

date

Make the Most of this Study

The following recommendations will help your Jesus' Church Study Group experience the intended outcomes:

1. Each lesson builds upon the previous lesson, so work together and find a way to cover all seven lessons in as close to seven weeks as possible.
2. Invite everyone to bring their Bibles and pens.
3. If possible, sit at a table to be able to read, write, snack, and be closer to one another.

** Supplemental teaching videos and downloadable booklets are all available through the BFAM App. Visit: <https://bit.ly/BFAMapp> or scan the QR code.*



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Though the ESV and certain English versions do not capitalize divine pronouns, they have been capitalized in this resource.

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"And they devoted
themselves to the apostles'
teaching, and the
fellowship, to the breaking
of bread and
the prayers."

Acts 2:42

06 | The Prayers

Welcome to Lesson Six of the Jesus' Church group study! Let's open in prayer and ask God to teach us today about Jesus' Church.
[Open in prayer.]

Before we begin this week's lesson, let's each take no more than 30 to 60 seconds to share something we received from this past week's scriptures. [Invite everyone to share.]

Thanks to each of you for sharing. At the end of this lesson, you'll find this week's 7-Day Plan. Once again, we'll take 10 to 15 minutes a day to read a short Scripture passage, write the answer to a question or two, and pray that God will use us that day to minister to people.

Okay, let's begin Lesson Six. So far in the Jesus' Church group study, we've learned about "The Foundation," "The Power," "The Teaching," "The Fellowship," and "The Bread." Today's lesson is about the last of the four priorities of the Acts 2 church: "The Prayers."

Why We Must Pray

Some people mistakenly believe that God's will always comes to pass on the earth, but that's not what Scripture teaches. For example, 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is . . . not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance," and yet Jesus said in Matthew 7:13, "The gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it" (CSB). If God's will always comes to pass, how can it be that God desires all people to repent and be saved, and yet most of them will not? As you can see, God's will does not always come to pass on the earth. Why?

Although God is the Creator of all things and has sovereign authority over the entire universe, He chose to use His sovereign authority to give human beings dominion over the earth. In Genesis 1:26, God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. And let them have dominion over [over all the earth]." Psalm 115:16 says, "The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth He has given to the human race" (CSB). Not only did God give human beings dominion over the earth, but He also continues to honor that decision. This is why Jesus taught us to pray to the Father saying, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). No one knows how Father God operates better than Jesus, so if Jesus said we need to pray so that the will of God can be done, then we know it is necessary.

Jesus Calls His Church to Pray

In the Old Testament, God would call His people to humble themselves and pray so that He would respond with supernatural power. 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

This call to prayer did not change in the New Testament. For example, Jesus told the apostles in Luke 10:2:

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Now, if it's "His harvest," then why doesn't the Lord of the harvest just send out the laborers? We already know the answer: God delegated dominion over the earth to human beings, and Jesus was now calling His apostles to use their dominion in prayer.

The apostles watched Jesus, a human being, take responsibility to pray so that God's will in heaven would come down to earth for one person after another after another. And they also saw how much time Jesus took to pray so that God's will and plan would be accomplished. Luke 5:16 says, "Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray" (NASB).

God delegated dominion over the earth to human beings

After Jesus ascended, the apostles knew that in order to have the same effectiveness as Jesus, they would need to follow Jesus' example and spend significant time in prayer. This became quite clear in Acts 6 when a great need arose to care for widows, but the apostles called for other leaders to be commissioned. The apostles insisted, "We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). They knew that if they did not pray and minister the Word, the will of God would not continue to come to pass. It's just that simple.

And this is why the Acts 2 church "devoted themselves to . . . the prayers" (Acts 2:42). Jesus had convinced the apostles that prayer is what releases the powers of heaven, and the apostles then convinced the Acts 2 church of this truth.

And now, Jesus is convincing us, Jesus' Church.

Jesus is sending us behind enemy lines with His authority to deliver them and bring them

Considering this, let's read again what Jesus said in Matthew 16:18:

"I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Notice that Jesus didn't say the gates of hell would not prevail against Him, but rather, they would not prevail against His Church. So we are the ones engaged in a battle with hell. Notice also that Jesus said "the gates" of hell. Gates are defensive, so Jesus called His Church to be on offense. The kingdom of darkness is deceiving and holding captive many people for whom Jesus died, and Jesus is sending us behind enemy lines with His authority to deliver them and bring them back into relationship with their Creator. To do this, we must engage in battle with spirits of darkness.

Let's read what the apostle Paul said in Ephesian 6:12:

"We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

And Jesus said in Luke 10:19:

"Behold, I give you the authority . . . over all the power of the enemy" (NKJV).

Words of Prayer

One misconception some people have about prayer is that it is simply a posture of the heart, but the Bible doesn't speak about prayer that way. So what does the Bible say prayer is?

All through the Bible, prayer is described as speaking words to God. For example, Numbers 12:13 says, "Moses cried out to the Lord, saying" (NASB). It does not say he "cried out to the Lord, thinking." Also, Isaiah 37:15 says, "Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, saying" (NASB). And when Jesus taught His disciples to pray in Luke 11:2, He said, "When you pray, say: 'Our Father in heaven'" (NKJV); He did not say, "When you pray, think: Our Father." So prayer is verbal communication with God.

God never promised to answer our thoughts—and aren't we all glad He doesn't?! Many thoughts go through our minds, but we can choose our words. This is why death and life are not in the power of the mind but in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21). The Bible teaches that God knows our thoughts, but He answers our prayers. We must pray with words.

*"If we ask anything according to His will,
He hears us."*

1 John 5:14

Prayers God Answers

God does not, however, answer just any words.

Let's read 1 John 5:14–15:

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him" (NIV).

So, we need to pray according to God's will. The good news is, God sent His Word—the Bible—to reveal His will. One excellent way to learn to pray the will of God is to begin with one of the promises of God. For example, you may say something like, "Father, Your Word says in James 1:5, 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him,' so I ask You for wisdom regarding this situation in the name of Jesus, and I thank You that according to Your Word, it will be given to me."

God's Word also teaches us that God answers prayers of faith. For example, Jesus said, "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24). As we spend time meditating on the promises in God's Word regarding a situation, we begin believing God's promises more and more, and when that transition fully takes place in our hearts, our prayer become a prayer of faith.

Fervent Prayer

Sometimes people pray prayers to teach (or impress) others. One by one they'll take turns saying good things, but no one sincerely calls out to the God of heaven with fervency and faith. This kind of intellectual prayer is not the kind of prayer God answers. God responds to earnest prayers sincerely directed to Him. Psalm 3:4 says, "I cried aloud to the Lord, and He answered me from His holy hill," and Psalm 34:6 says, "This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (NKJV). When you really need God to act, you're not so concerned about pleasing or impressing others, and you become willing to cry out to Him.

In Acts 12 a ruthless king named Herod killed one of the 12 apostles, James the brother of John. And when Herod saw that it pleased the Jews who opposed the Church, he arrested Peter, intending to kill him as well. But something happened that supernaturally thwarted Herod's plan.

Acts 12:5 says, "Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made to God intensely by the church" (NASB). Did you catch that? The people of the church began praying to God "intensely." These were not superficial prayers to impress one another. Peter was the most prominent of all the apostles, and the people needed God's power to stop the king from doing what he intended to do. So they prayed intensely, with fervency, and God answered. He not only sent an angel to deliver Peter from prison, but before the chapter ends, that ruthless king was dead. God is real, and if we will fervently pray prayers of faith, God will answer with His power.

Various Kinds of Prayer

Acts 2:42 tells us that the Acts 2 church devoted themselves to "the prayers." The words "the prayers" are translated from two plural Greek words. In other words, the church was not simply devoted to praying—they were devoted to praying the various kinds of prayers that the apostles taught them.

Just like the Old Testament, the New Testament also teaches us about different kinds of prayer. Ephesians 6:18 says, “Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers” (NIV). And Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:1, “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.”

Though this short lesson does not explain the various prayers, they each have a specific purpose and are effective when prayed correctly. The prayers mentioned in the New Testament include prayers of praise, thanksgiving, worship, confession, petition, supplication, intercession, agreement, praying in the Spirit (tongues), healing, deliverance, and blessing.

Personal Prayer

One of the ways the Bible teaches us to pray is by ourselves. In Matthew 6:6 Jesus said, “When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” James 5:16 says, “The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect” (CSB). This kind of prayer is so effective that 1 Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to “pray without ceasing.” So Jesus is asking us to develop the habit of praying every day and throughout the day as individuals.

In Lesson Two we learned that praying in the Spirit (tongues) is a powerful way of praying which should be a daily part of a believer’s life. Praying in the Spirit not only helps us to pray without ceasing, but it also builds us up and allows the Holy Spirit to help us pray the will of God precisely (Jude 1:20; Romans 8:26–27).

The Unstoppable Prayer of Agreement

Jesus taught His disciples another way of praying that is so powerful He taught it to them more than once. Let’s read what Jesus said in Matthew 18:19–20:

*“Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. **20** For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.”*

Jesus is very precise with His words, so these two verses are loaded with insight. Let’s look closely at what Jesus said:

- Jesus began with the words “Again I say to you,” which tells us this way of praying is so important He wanted to make sure the 12 apostles understood it. And since this prayer is in Scripture, we know the Holy Spirit wants us to understand it as well.

- The words “It will be done for them by My Father in heaven” tell us three things: First, we should direct our prayers to Father God. Second, if we will pray this prayer the way Jesus is teaching us to, our Father in heaven will do what we ask. And third, by Jesus saying the answer will be done “for them” instead “for you,” He is telling us this prayer was not limited to the 12 apostles but will work for others.
- Using the word “if” tells us that there are conditions that need to be met. Let’s go over five conditions:

1. “If two of you . . .” – This is not an individual prayer. It requires at least two people.
2. “If two of you agree.” – Those who are praying must agree about what they are asking. This may require prior discussion. Also, considering what Jesus taught in other passages about the importance of faith, we should agree that our Father will answer our prayer and not just hope He does
3. “On earth.” – The participants of this prayer must be alive on earth today
4. “They ask.” – This is not a prayer where one person prays while the others simply nod and say, “Amen.” He said the Father will do anything “they ask.” And there is no indication in Scripture that they should pray one at a time
5. “Gathered in My name.” – Jesus taught them to gather and pray in His name because His name carries all authority (Matthew 28:18). He also told them in John 16:23, “Whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you”

- And finally, Jesus used the word “for” to explain a significant reason this prayer will be answered. He said, “It will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For [because] where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.” Do you see that? Jesus said whenever two or three of us gather in His name, He is also there, which means He is there praying and agreeing too. No wonder the Father will answer this kind of prayer.

A Real-life Story

The following story comes from Jerry Trousedale’s book, *Miraculous Movements*.

A disciple-maker/leader in a Muslim country sent two of his church planters to reach and plant churches in a certain village. So they went to the chief of the village to get permission to be there and make connection with people, but the chief sent them away strongly, telling them that his people didn’t want Christianity, and that they

were not allowed to share about the Christian faith in that village. So the church planters returned to their leader and reported that there was no opportunity there, and that the village was hostile to Christianity. To their surprise, however, their leader didn't change his mind. Instead, he said, "Let's pray." He called together the intercessory prayer team and they interceded in prayer for that specific village for two whole days. After the days of prayer, the leader added a third person to their team and sent them back to the same village.

When the team of three church planters arrived, they went back to the chief's home. They requested again to make connection with the people, but the chief, being quite bothered that they came back, said, "No way!", and told them they needed to leave. So the church planters said, "Well, Chief, may we pray?" The chief, having been taught as a Muslim to value prayer, said, "Who will deny prayer? As long as it is prayer to help us, we will not deny it. Pray for us, but after prayer, please go because we don't want you to come and say anything to our children to turn their hearts to another religion; that is the white man's religion. We don't need it here."

The church planters had learned that the chief's son had a serious physical problem; something like polio. He had tried many things to help his son's condition, but nothing worked. So they said to the chief, "Can we pray for your son?" So the chief gave them permission but then reiterated that they needed to leave after they prayed for him.

So the three church planters prayed for the chief's son to be healed, and he was instantly healed. The child jumped up and walked with no limping or difficulty whatsoever. He ran to the chief and grabbed him with joy, saying, "I am healed, Father!"

Then the chief looked at the church planters and said, "You people, you are magicians!"

And they replied, "No! This is Jesus!" and they explained that Jesus was the one who healed his son.

The chief responded, saying, "As from today, this is your home . . . you are welcome." And he even told them that they were welcome to build a big Christian cathedral in the village, which they were not interested in doing. So, being welcomed, the church planters proceeded to teach the gospel, baptize new believers, make disciples, and plant churches . . . right there in that "hostile village."

[Trousdale, Jerry. Miraculous Movements. Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 2012.]

Now, what would have happened if the disciple-maker had not called people together to pray, and then followed the direction of the Holy Spirit to send a now-Holy-Spirit-empowered team back to that village? Likely nothing! The church planters would have just moved

on to other villages and left that hostile village alone. And all the people who have now been saved in that village, along with those who will be saved through them, likely would have been unnecessarily lost for eternity. Thank God that didn't happen! Someone believed, took responsibility, and prayed.

Let's conclude this lesson by studying a vivid example of the prayer of agreement in the early church. Let's read Acts 4:23–31:

“When they [Peter and John] had been released [from custody], they went to their own companions and reported everything that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard this, they raised their voices [singular] to God with one mind and said, ‘Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything that is in them, 25 who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, “Why were the nations insolent, and the peoples plotting in vain? 26 ‘The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.” 27 For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus . . . 29 And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant it to Your bond-servants to speak Your word with all confidence, 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.’ 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness” (NASB).

“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness”

Acts 4:31

Before we read about how God answered their prayer, let's notice two important details from this passage:

- Verse 24 says this group of believers, which likely included apostles, “raised their voices to God.” The Greek word translated “voices” is singular, which is why some other translations use “voice.” Though there was likely a large group of believers praying in this house, they all prayed aloud in agreement as if speaking with one voice.
- Verse 24 goes on to say they raised their voice to God “with one mind.” These three words are translated from one Greek word which means “common consent,” “unanimous,” “single-mindedness,” and “without dissent.”

What do these details tell us? These early church believers were praying the prayer of agreement that Jesus (repeatedly) taught the apostles. They all agreed . . . they all prayed . . . they raised their voices with fervency . . . and they prayed in such unity that the Holy Spirit described it as one voice and with one mind. They prayed the unstoppable prayer! And according to Jesus, He was in that room agreeing with them.

They prayed in such unity that the Holy Spirit described it as one voice and with one mind.

Let's close by reading and discussing how God responded in Acts 5:12–16:

“Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. 13 None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. 14 And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 15 so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. 16 The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.”

Discussion Questions

(Be sure to discuss the fourth question!)

1. What specific requests made in Acts 4:29–30 are answered supernaturally in Acts 5:12–16?
2. In what ways did God move by His power in Acts 5 that were not specifically mentioned in the Acts 4 prayer?
3. How will each of us obey the Word of God to pray each day—and throughout the day? [Let each person answer.]
4. Is the unstoppable prayer of agreement worth sacrificing to pray regularly? If so, how often and when will we gather together to pray fervent prayers of faith and agreement so God will begin moving by His power as He wants to?

Close in Prayer

As we close, let's spend some time in prayer, lifting our voices together and using some of the prayers we learned about, such as praise, thanksgiving, praying in the Spirit (tongues), and the prayer of agreement.

7-Day Plan | Week Four

Day 1 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Matthew 7:7-11

Write: What is the simple message Jesus is teaching here? If this is true, what should we be doing a lot more?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

James 1:5

Day 2 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: John 16:23-24

Write: What is the simple message Jesus is teaching here? What should you ask the Father for today in the name of Jesus?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 3 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Ephesians 6:10–18

Write: What words or phrases show us who is responsible to confront demonic forces? How does verse 18 tell us to pray?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 4 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Luke 6:12–19

Write: What supernatural things happened as a result of Jesus praying all night? What does this teach us about how we should pray?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 5 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: James 5:16–18

Write: What does this teach us about prayer? How should this affect our own prayers?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 6 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Matthew 6:5–6

Write: What is the difference between the reward of prayer to impress others and the reward of genuine prayer to Father God?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Reminder!

Does the Lord have something for you to share with someone at your coming Jesus' Church gathering? Continue to invite Him to speak through you.

Day 7 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: James 4:2–3

Write: What reasons does this passage give for unanswered prayers? How does it teach us to pray correctly?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

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