

Unit One

Prayer and Worship: A Way of Life



Lesson 1

Praying To Whom?

“This, then, is how you should pray”

Matthew 6:9

To whom we pray is more important than how or where we pray. Wouldn't it be terrible if we learned all there is to know about how to pray, and then found that we had been praying to the wrong one?

How we pray, though, is more important than where we pray. If we pray to the right One, and pray in the right way, it does not make much difference whether we are inside a building, walking, or working. What is inside of us is more important than what is outside of us!

So, in this lesson we are going to talk about the true God, and how to pray to Him. We are going to study the things that are important to God so that we can pray according to His will. We want to learn how our talk in prayer can affect our walk in life. We have so much to learn!



lesson outline

False Concepts of God

The “No God” Man

The “Cannot Know for Sure” Man

The “Do Not Want God” Man

The “Nature Is God” Man

The “I Am God” Man

The “Any God Will Do” Man

The “Ancestral Spirits” Man

The Self-Revealing God

Revealed by His Written Word

Revealed by His Living Son

Revealed by His Holy Spirit

Christ’s Teaching on Prayer

Secret and Simple Praying

Praying Always

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- Discuss false concepts people have about God and how these concepts affect their worship.
- Identify the ways by which the true God has revealed Himself.

- Summarize what Jesus had to say about prayer, and apply these principles to your life.

learning activities

1. Memorize all the verses in Matthew 6:5-8.
2. Read the lesson development section by section. Write the answers to the study questions in each section. The study questions in this lesson will include some multiple choice questions. To indicate your choice of the best possible answer, circle the letter preceding the one you have chosen.
3. Take the self-test at the end of the lesson, and check your answers with those given at the back of the book. You may use your Bible when verses are referred to that you were not asked to memorize.
4. After you have finished the lesson development, look back over the lesson objectives to make sure you can do what is suggested there.
5. Start to keep a notebook. Write the longer answers to the study questions in it. You might want to write any new words and their definitions in it also.

key words

Understanding the key words we have listed at the beginning of each lesson will help you as you study. You will find key words listed in alphabetical order and defined in the glossary at the back of this independent-study textbook. If you are in doubt about the meaning of any of the words on the list, you may look them up now or when you come across them in your reading. Please take time to learn the definitions of any new words, since they are important to a complete understanding of this course.

agnostics	interpreted	priorities
ancestral spirits	meditation	reprobates
animism	nature	tongues
atheists	pantheists	universalists
egotists	petition	

lesson development

FALSE CONCEPTS OF GOD

Objective 1. *Define seven false concepts about God.*

The “No God” Man

Let us start our study about prayer and worship by saying that people who worship must have someone (or something) to which they pray. You cannot worship if there is nothing to worship. Some people claim there is no God and that, therefore, there is nothing to worship. “No use to pray,” they say, “because there is no one to listen!” We call these people *atheists* because they do not believe that God exists. Foolish people! They cannot see the proof of God even when it is before their eyes. The exact order of the universe, the beauty of the flowers, and our wonderful human body—all speak with one voice saying, “There is a Creator-God.” It would be as reasonable to look at a watch and say it made itself as it would be to say that the world came into being without a Creator.

Mark your choice of the best answer by circling the letter to the left of the one you have chosen.

- 1** The atheist does not pray because
- a) he does not believe there is a God.
 - b) he is not sure if there is a God.
 - c) he doesn’t want to obey God.

The “Cannot Know for Sure” Man

Some people are troubled because they cannot see God. They see what He created, and they believe there must be a cause for creation. But they doubt and say, “We cannot be sure. Perhaps there is, and perhaps there is not a God.” We call these people *agnostics* because they believe that even if there is a God, man cannot know Him. “Why pray,” they say, “when you are not sure there is anyone there to hear?”

The “Do Not Want God” Man

There are many, many people who are aware of the fact that God exists, but do not want to obey Him. We call them

reprobates because they refuse to accept that which they know. Reprobates do not pray either, since they “love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil” (John 3:19). But the day will come when reprobates will pray. They will pray for the rocks to fall on them to hide them “from the eyes of the one who sits on the throne” (Revelation 6:16). It will be a day of wrath and judgment.

2 Why do reprobates not pray?

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The “Nature Is God” Man

Many people believe that God and nature are one. They do not believe in a Creator-God who is separate from His creation. These people say that trees are God; clouds are God; man is God. We call such people *pantheists*. They say that everything good is God. How wrong they are! To them, nature is God. To them, God is impersonal. The pantheist’s God is faceless! You cannot pray to him for he has no ears! He cannot answer you for he has no voice! He cannot see you because he has no eyes! He cannot love you because he has no heart! What kind of a God is that? You see, it is one thing to say that God is love, and it is quite another thing to say that love is God. Also, it is one thing to say that God is in His creation, and it is quite another thing to say that the creation is God!

3 Name four things that the god of pantheists cannot do.

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The “I Am God” Man

These are the people who will tell you that every person has a right to believe what he pleases, and that one person’s idea is as good as that of another. Let us call these people *egotists* because they see no god except themselves. They do not want anyone else to tell them what to do. The egotists accept no standards of behavior they do not like. *Good* to them is what is good for themselves. They do not pray. Why should they? They want no authority higher than their own idea of what is good and bad.

4 What are the standards of the egotist based upon?

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The “Any God Will Do” Man

There are many people of this kind. “It doesn’t matter what God you worship. One is just as good as the other. Any God will do.” These are the people we call *universalists*. They believe that religions are like paths that lead to the top of a mountain. Each religion takes a different route, but they all get to the top. This is a dangerous and an evil teaching. Those who believe it are really saying that God is an idea in man’s mind, and is not a reality. Yet, God is not an idea. He is real. He is one God. He is the Creator of the world and of everything in it. We must find out who He is. We must worship Him. We will talk about who He is in the next section. But before we do, let us talk about one other belief that is held by people all over the world.

5 What do we call the “Any God Will Do” Man?

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The “Ancestral Spirits” Man

Most people believe in life after death. However, because the dead are no longer seen after they leave us, there is a mystery about them. Some people believe the dead come back as spirits, which move about in the area where they once lived. They think these spirits take part in the activities of the living. This belief is called *animism*.

Because of the unknown, and because of the terror of the unseen, there is much fear among animists. While many of them believe there is a God, they think that He is too far away and is too indifferent to their needs to be of help to them. Therefore, their worship takes the form of gifts intended to please and petition the spirits which they believe are near them. Charms are used to keep trouble away, and sacrifices are made to gain the favor of the spirits of the dead. The Bible says, “Fear has to do with punishment” (1 John 4:18), and this is the feeling of the animist. That same verse says that “perfect love drives out all fear.” We now want to talk about the true God of love who is

near to all them that call upon Him. He has power to answer prayer and cast out fear.

6 Why does the “Ancestral Spirit” Man use charms and sacrifices?

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THE SELF-REVEALING GOD

Objective 2. Write three ways in which the true God has revealed Himself to man.

Revealed by His Written Word

A God who requires man to worship and to obey Him must reveal Himself to man. This is exactly what the true God has done. He has revealed Himself. We can know Him. We can also know His will.

Each religion points to its prophets, its visions, its miracles, and the writings of its teachers. The true God has given us all of these things and has done even more to make Himself known. He has revealed Himself and His will by speaking to us in the three ways symbolized in the illustrations below.



God has revealed Himself through prophets and apostles who have written His words in the sacred book called the Bible. Men have been changed wherever the Bible has been believed and accepted as God’s Word. Whenever a man will accept the teachings of Jesus, and will acknowledge Him to be the Son of

God, a miracle takes place in that man’s life. He becomes a new person! He leaves his evil ways to follow that which is good. Consider the unity of the Bible’s message—a message written by many different men at different times and in different places. Add to this the record of the Bible’s survival despite efforts to destroy and discredit it. Without doubt, the Bible is a miracle book. It is a book that reveals God to us.

7 Whom did God use to record His words in the Bible?

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Revealed by His Living Son

God revealed Himself through Jesus Christ, His Son. Jesus lived more than 30 years on this earth as a man. “The Word became a human being and . . . lived among us” (John 1:14). Think of the claim of Jesus Christ. He said that He was God’s Son. He backed His claim by His miraculous ministry of healing and power. Think of the death and resurrection of Jesus. God has certainly revealed Himself through His Son. God revealed Himself through Jesus’ personal appearance on this earth.

8 Who is the Word through whom God reveals Himself?

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Revealed by His Holy Spirit

God reveals Himself also by His Spirit at any time, to any man who will accept the truth about Jesus Christ. “God’s Spirit joins himself to our spirits to declare that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16). The Spirit of God makes every man who believes a new person. What God has done for others, He will do for you. If you will put your faith in Him, He will reveal Himself to you by His Spirit. Worship the true God! Pray and let God’s Spirit bear witness with yours! When you have felt His power in your own life, there will be nothing more to prove. You will know who the true God is!

9 What is another way God makes known to you that you are His child?

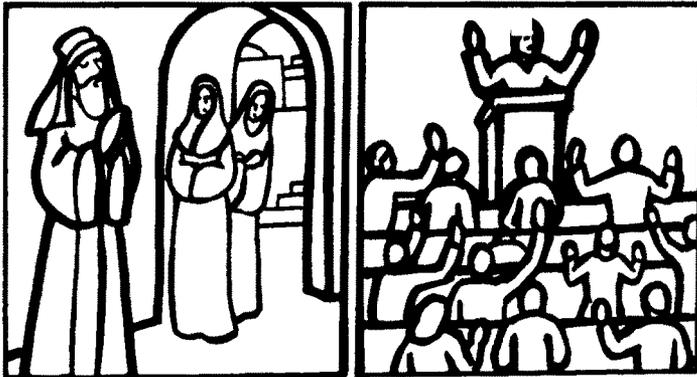
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CHRIST’S TEACHING ON PRAYER

Objective 3. *Explain the priorities in the prayer Jesus taught His disciples.*

Secret and Simple Praying

The disciples said to Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). We can learn best how to pray from the One who prays best. Therefore, let us allow Jesus to be our teacher.



Jesus told His disciples not to pray like the Pharisees (Matthew 6:5). They prayed in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets. Is it wrong to pray in public? Of course not! Jesus did not rebuke the Pharisees for praying in public. He rebuked them for praying just to be seen of men. Praying in public is not wrong. Jesus prayed in public. It is praying to be seen of men that is wrong!

10 Look up Matthew 6:5-6 in your Bible. What will God do for those who pray in secret?

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There are many occasions when it is right and proper for one person to speak for a group of people in public prayer. This is, perhaps, the most difficult kind of praying, because attention is focused on the one who prays. Often the people think more about the person who is praying than they do about God, to whom he is praying. This can cause a great temptation to come to the one who

prays. He may be tempted to do what the Pharisees did. He may be tempted to pray to be seen and heard of men.

11 Circle the letter to the left of the best answer.

The Lord told His disciples not to be like the Pharisees because the Pharisees prayed

- a) in public.
- b) long prayers.
- c) to be seen of men.

There are those who can lead a group of people into the very presence of God. They are able to direct the people’s minds toward the Lord. How we need this kind of prayer leaders! Ministers, especially, should develop this gift.

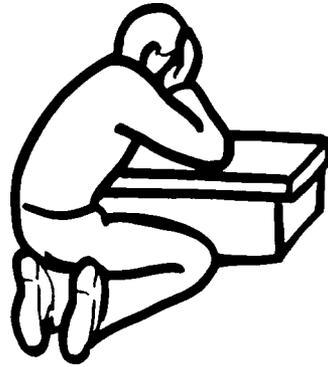
How can we learn to lead in public prayers without thinking about ourselves or the other people? This is not learned by “practicing” in public. It is learned by praying in private. It is also learned when we are alone with God, and His Spirit teaches us to put everything out of our minds except the Lord. Then, when we stand in public, it will be as though we are still in private. Even though we know the people are listening, our thoughts are only on what we are saying to Jesus. We are alone with God in the midst of people.

12 How can we learn to pray in public?

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Spirit-filled people often pray together. This is a way by which each believer can shut himself in with God even while he is in a group of people. When people pray together, it is a beautiful experience. Many times, when praying together, the Spirit of God will be felt by the people, and there will be praising and speaking in tongues. By tongues we mean worship in the Spirit in a language given by God which no one understands unless it is interpreted. This is a spiritual gift that you can read about in 1 Corinthians 14. It is a gift for the believer who has faith to receive it and it is a great help in worshiping. When this happens, everyone is blessed and God is glorified.

What about praying in private? Jesus said for us to go into our room and close the door. He said that our Father who sees what we do in private will reward us openly (Matthew 6:6). Jesus was referring to a state of mind more than to a room with a door when He said these words. What is important is that we get alone with God. You can be alone with God wherever you are. Some people pray best when they are walking in the forest. Some prefer a room away from other people. Some are able to be “alone” even when there are others about them. The important thing is to be alone with God.



13 What important lesson was Jesus teaching when he said that we should go into our room and shut the door when we pray?

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We should remember that prayer is talking with God. When you are visiting with someone, it is important that each one has a chance to talk. Some of our praying is not at all like talking together. It sounds like we are preaching to God! Such praying is very poor praying. Who likes to visit with a person who does all the talking? We like to get away from such people as quickly as possible. We don't enjoy talking to them. It must be that the Lord often wishes that He could say something to us, but we do not give Him a chance to speak! It is much more important for us to listen to God than for God to listen to us. What can we tell Him that He does not already know? But, oh, there is so much for us to learn . . . if we would only listen!



How can we listen to God? How does God talk to us? One excellent way to listen to God is to pray with God's Word before us.

If we will read a verse and then ask God to show us what it means, God will bring the meaning to our minds.

That is God talking to us. The Holy Spirit will be our teacher—leading us into all truth. When the Spirit makes a truth real to us, then is the time for us to worship God and thank Him for the truth He has taught us. We can then continue to read until God speaks once more from His Word. What a wonderful way to pray!

14 What is a good way to hear what God wants to say to us when we pray?

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Remember what Jesus said about “meaningless words” (Matthew 6:7). God is not deaf. He is not indifferent and does not have to be persuaded. Since He is a God of love, we only have to mention our petitions and trust Him to answer. Sometimes we show our lack of faith by asking over and over again as though God hadn’t heard us the first time we asked. Other times we act as if we believe He has to be persuaded. God is a God of love. He is not hard-hearted or selfish. He wants to help us!

15 Circle the letter on the left of each TRUE statement.

- a) God wants to answer our prayers.
- b) God does not answer some of our prayers because He is selfish.
- c) It is necessary for our prayers to be lengthy.
- d) God wants us to pray with confidence and trust in Him.

Praying Always

Objective 4. *Explain the meaning of “praying always.”*

We are told to “pray always for all God’s people” (Ephesians 6:18). In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 we read, “Pray at all times.” How can a person pray at all times? How can he pray always?

It is plain to see that prayer is more than kneeling down. It is more than time spent in meditation, in acts of worship, and in petitions. Prayer is to be “always.” It is to be “at all times.” It must then, of necessity, be an attitude or way of life.

Now, such an attitude or way of life cannot be accomplished without private and public prayer and worship. Attitudes and habits are formed by doing things over and over again. This is true of prayer. You cannot pray “at all times” unless you make a habit of prayer.

Yet, our prayer life must not be measured in terms of time. It must be measured by the quality of our praying. Many times our minds are at home while our bodies are in church. Or, our minds are in the kitchen when our knees are bent in prayer. If we learn to pray right, we will be able to walk right all of the time. This is what we mean by “praying always.” So, we should learn God’s will from His Word, submitting ourselves to Him in prayer and worship until we can walk every hour of every day according to His plan for our life.

16 Why is it not best to measure prayer in terms of time?

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Jesus is our example of prayer. He spent long hours in prayer. He fasted. To what purpose? To secure answers to His own desires? To secure deliverance for those who were afflicted? Not at all! His prayers for the sick were short and simple. Why? Because His whole life was one of prayer and worship. By seeking His Father’s will in prayer, He was able to walk constantly according to that will. He prayed at all times!

17 Why didn’t Jesus have to pray long prayers for the deliverance of the sick?

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How can we pray according to God’s will? Jesus teaches us how in Matthew 6:9-13. He said, “This, then, is how you should pray” (Matthew 6:9). When Jesus was talking about *how* to pray, He was talking about the *order* in which we ask for things. He was talking about seeking the most important things first. Notice the order of asking in the prayer that He taught. First, He talked about *your* name, *your* kingdom, and *your* will. After that, He prayed, “Give *us*, forgive *us*, bring *us*, and keep *us*.” In other words, what Jesus was saying was that when we pray we must

give priority to God’s name, God’s kingdom, and God’s will. To start our prayers with “Give us, forgive us, bring us, and keep us” is the wrong order of asking. Jesus said it so clearly in Matthew 6:33, “Be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things.”

18 Priorities in prayer are the of God, the of God, and the of God.

When we learn how to pray as Jesus taught, we will learn to live as Jesus lived. When we are concerned about the kingdom of God above everything else, we will be praying at all times!

As long as our wants are more important to us than God’s will, we will stumble along, measuring the hours we spend in prayer. Yet, God does not hold a watch in His hand to see how long we stay in the prayer room. God is seeking to be the Lord of our life every moment of every day!

19 Four of the things that God has promised to provide, if we will be concerned with the kingdom of God, are: (See Matthew 6:9-13.)

- a**
- b**
- c**
- d**

self-test

After you have reviewed this lesson, take the self-test. Then check your answers with those given in your student report. Review any questions you answered incorrectly.

SHORT ANSWER. Write the correct answer in the space provided.

1 Why do agnostics not pray?

2 Write the words in 1 John 4:18 that can give hope to the “Ancestral Spirits” Man.
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3 What evidence of God is seen in a man’s life when he accepts the teachings of Christ and acknowledges Him to be the Son of God?
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4 Write the request of the disciples in Luke 11:1.
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5 Why is praying in public difficult?
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6 Name three ways in which God has revealed Himself.
a Revealed by His
b Revealed by His
c Revealed by His

7 Prayer without ceasing is learning to right so that we can right. This means that we always seek God’s above our own will.

MULTIPLE CHOICE. There is only one correct answer for each question. Circle the letter of the correct answer.

8 The pantheist would say that

- a) God loves all men.
- b) nature is God.
- c) God is a good God.

9 What can we do so that we hear the voice of God?

- a) Spend a lot of time asking God to supply our needs.
- b) Read God's Word often, meditate upon it, and ask God to help us understand it.
- c) Repeat the Lord's prayer over and over again.

10 A person who prays without ceasing is

- a) always on his knees in prayer.
- b) always thinking about God.
- c) always seeking God's kingdom above everything else.

MATCHING. Match each name (right) to the statement (left) which best describes it.

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| a | The "Do Not Want God" Man | 1) Atheist |
| b | The "Ancestral Spirits" Man | 2) Agnostic |
| c | The "Cannot Know For Sure" Man | 3) Pantheist |
| d | The "Any God" Man | 4) Egotist |
| e | The "No God" Man | 5) Reprobate |
| f | The "I Am God" Man | 6) Universalist |
| g | The "Nature is God" Man | 7) Animist |

answers to the study questions

These answers have been mixed so that you will not accidentally see the answer to the next question before you write your own response. Please do not look ahead, but write your own answer to each question before comparing it with the one we have given. This will help you to remember what you have studied.

10 Reward them openly.

1 a) he does not believe there is a God.

11 c) to be seen of men.

2 Because they love darkness rather than light.

12 We can learn to pray in public by learning first to pray in private.

3 He cannot answer, love, hear, or see. (Any order.)

13 That we need to spend time alone with God in prayer.

4 His own idea of right and wrong.

14 To pray with God's Word before us, asking Him to help us understand it.

5 A universalist.

15 a True.

b False.

c False.

d True.

6 Because he fears the spirits of the dead.

16 Because our mind is not always on our praying when we are on our knees.

7 The prophets and apostles.

17 Because He prayed without ceasing, by walking constantly in God's will.

8 Jesus Christ.

18 name, kingdom, will

9 God's Spirit joins Himself to our spirit to declare that we are His children.

19 a Food.

b Forgiveness.

c No hard testing.

d To keep us from the evil one.