

# 6 Topical Study

---

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote, “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Colossians 4:2). Then he asked the people to pray for him and his fellow workers. He wanted God to give them chances to preach the gospel. To understand why Paul told the people to be persistent, to keep alert, to give thanks, and ask for specific things in prayer, we will do a topical study of prayer.

Topical Bible studies help you to understand deeper truths about the Christian life. You may want to know how to live by faith, or maybe you need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Do you know who you are in Christ? How can you live a holy life? Whatever the topic, a study of it will show more of God’s plan for you.

## ***The Plan***

---

- A. Benefits of Topical Study
- B. The Approach to Topical Study
- C. The Topic of Prayer

## ***The Goals***

---

- 1. State two benefits of topical study.
- 2. List three steps in topical study.
- 3. Practice a topical study of prayer as a model for other topical studies.

## **A. BENEFITS OF TOPICAL STUDY**


### **Goal 1.** State two benefits of topical study.

We already suggested one benefit of topical study—to find answers to questions about how to live a Christian life. You might want assurance of your salvation, victory over fear, or knowledge of God’s will for you. You can find these answers by searching the Bible for passages that teach about these things.

Another benefit of topical study is that it helps you to balance the teachings on main topics of God’s Word. These main topics are the basic truths God intends for us to live by. Paul advised Titus to “hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:9). As you study each truth from various viewpoints, compare one reference with another to better be able to interpret God’s Word as He intends.

## ***Application***

---

- 1** In your own words, state two reasons why topical study helps us.
- .....
- 
- 

## B. THE APPROACH TO TOPICAL STUDY

**Goal 2.** List three steps in topical study.

A topical study may be time-consuming. Some topics, like the Holy Spirit or salvation, occur often in the Bible. Bible scholars who write books on these topics sometimes spend years searching for all the references to the topic. In doing a topical study, adhere to the following steps:

Step 1.

List all the references you can find to the topic you wish to study. (A Bible concordance lists many references for any given topic.) Write both the reference and the relevant part of the Scripture in a notebook.

Step 2.

Arrange the references into groups of related material. Write a title or heading for each list of references.

Step 3.

Summarize the main points about the topics in each list. To do this, read each Scripture and its context to be sure of the correct meaning. Place Scriptures under other headings if you see they should be changed. Write brief summaries in your own words.

### *Application*

---

**2** List three steps in a topical study.

.....

---



## C. THE TOPIC OF PRAYER

**Goal 3.** Practice a topical study of prayer as a model for other topical studies.

Prayer is an important topic in the Scriptures. The word *prayer* is stated over 500 times. We chose some of these

references for our study. You may find other references to include.

Follow our study and do the work yourself. The exercises will help you check your progress. First, list all the references to prayer you can find. Write a portion of the Scripture with each reference. For example, Genesis 20:17–18 states, “Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, . . .”

Here are the references we used in this study:

Genesis 20:17–18; 25:22–23

1 Samuel 1:10–20

2 Samuel 7:18–29

1 Kings 18:36–38

2 Chronicles 6:12–42

Nehemiah 1:5–11

Psalms 4:3; 63:1; 95:6

Proverbs 15:8; 28:9

Isaiah 1:15–20; 38:1–20; 56:7; 59:2

Jeremiah 14:11; 33:3

Daniel 9:3, 21–23

Jonah 2:7

Matthew 5:44–45; 6:1–14; 14:19, 23; 18:19–20; 19:13–15; 26:36–44

Mark 1:35; 6:46; 11:24–25; Luke 3:21–22; 5:16; 6:28; 9:28–36; 10:2; 11:1–13; 18:1, 7, 10–14

John 15:7; 17:1–26; Acts 1:14, 24; 4:29; 6:6; 8:15, 22; 9:40; 10:1, 2, 9, 31; 16:25

Romans 8:26–27; 10:1; 12:12; 15:31

1 Corinthians 14:13–25

2 Corinthians 1:11

Ephesians 3:20; 6:18–20

Philippians 1:19; 4:6

Colossians 4:2–4

1 Thessalonians 3:10; 5:25  
 2 Thessalonians 3:1–2  
 1 Timothy 2:1–8; 4:4; 5:5  
 Hebrews 5:7; 10:22; 11:6; 13:18  
 James 1:5–8; 4:3; 5:13–17  
 1 Peter 4:7  
 1 John 3:20–22; 5:14–16  
 Jude 20  
 Revelation 5:8

Write enough of the passage to know what it says about prayer. For 1 Samuel 1:10–20 you might write: “Hannah continued to pray to the LORD for a long time . . . ‘I have been praying like this because I’m so miserable’ . . . the Lord answered her . . . she gave birth to a son.”

For step 2 we organized the Scriptures into these categories:

*Whom to pray for.* Matthew 5:4; Acts 6:6; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 1 Timothy 2:1–2; James 5:16.

*When to pray.* 1 Samuel 1:10, 16; Matthew 26:36–44; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 18:7; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:5.

*Hindrances to prayer.* Proverbs 15:8; 28:9; Isaiah 1:15; 59:2; Matthew 6:5; Luke 18:10–14; 20:47; James 1:6–8; 4:3.

*Where to pray.* Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 9:18; Acts 1:14; 10:9; 1 Timothy 2:8.

*Answers to prayer.* Genesis 20:17–18; 25:22–23; Daniel 9:21–23; Jonah 2:7; Acts 4:29–31; 8:17; 10:31; 2 Corinthians 12:8–9.

*Prayer requests.* 1 Kings 18:36–38; Nehemiah 1:5–11, Psalm 64:1; Isaiah 38:2–5; Matthew 26:41; Luke 22:32; John 17:1–26; Acts 1:24; 4:29; 8:15, 22; 9:40; Romans 10:1; 15:31; Ephesians 6:18; James 1:5; 5:13–14.

*How to pray.* Jeremiah 33:3; Matthew 6:7–14; 18:19–20; 26:39; Mark 11:24–25; Luke 11:5–13; 18:1, 10–14; John 14:13–14; 15:7; Romans 8:26–27; 1 Corinthians 14:13–25; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 5:7; 10:22; 11:6; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 3:20–22; 5:14–15; Jude 20.

*Praise and thanksgiving.* 2 Samuel 7:18–29; Isaiah 38:10–20; Matthew 14:19; Acts 10:1–2; 16:25; 1 Timothy 4:4; James 5:13.

*Posture.* 1 Kings 8:22; Psalm 95:6; Jeremiah 33:3; Daniel 9:3; Matthew 19:13–15; 26:39; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:13; Acts 8:17; 9:40; 1 Timothy 2:8; James 5:14.

*Effects of prayer.* Proverbs 15:8; Luke 3:21–22; 9:28–35; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 3:20; Philippians 1:19; James 5:16–17; Revelation 5:8.

## ***Application***

---

**3** Draw a circle around the letter in front of each Scripture that refers to prayer.

- a)** 1 Peter 3:7
- b)** 1 Peter 3:9
- c)** 1 Peter 3:12
- d)** 1 Peter 3:17

**4** Match each Scripture with the category it fits and write the number in front of the category in the space in front of the Scripture.

- |                                   |                            |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ... <b>a</b> Psalm 66:18          | 1) Praise and thanksgiving |
| ... <b>b</b> Matthew 7:7–11       | 2) Hindrances to prayer    |
| ... <b>c</b> Mark 6:41            | 3) How to pray             |
| ... <b>d</b> 1 Thessalonians 5:17 | 4) Effects of prayer       |
|                                   | 5) When to pray            |

Now we are ready to summarize the main points given under each heading relating to prayer. Let the Bible speak to you and answer your questions.

## Application

---

**5** Turn back to the Scriptures listed under *whom to pray for*, and look them up. Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement about whom we should pray for.

- a) Pray for leaders, but only if they are godly.
- b) Pray for all God's people everywhere.
- c) Pray for our enemies.

**6** Turn to the Scriptures listed under *when to pray*. Circle the letter in front of each answer that could complete this sentence. We should pray

- a) both day and night.
- b) continually.
- c) no matter how we feel.

**7** Another reason we should pray always is found in Psalm 121:4. Write that reason here.

.....

**8** Are we sometimes responsible for our prayers not being answered? Read the Scriptures under hindrances to prayer. Then mark the reasons you would give if someone asked you what might hinder our prayers.

- a) Disobedience or hidden sin in our lives
- b) Asking for selfish reasons
- c) Maybe our parents or grandparents sinned.

**9** The list of Scriptures given in this course is by no means complete. Bible stories, too, give insights concerning the places where people have prayed—like Jonah crying out to God from the belly of the whale. After reading the Scriptures under *where to pray*, mark the correct sentence.

- a) The church is the best place to pray.
- b) If you really want answers, pray alone.
- c) We can pray anywhere and God will hear.

**10** Circle the correct letter. Some people receive answers that are different from what they expected,

- a)** and some will never get answers.
- b)** but all receive answers from God.
- c)** so maybe they did not have faith.

**11** Prayer requests vary. People ask for signs, healing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, divine guidance, greater faith, and for material needs to be met. Perhaps what you want most has not been named, but you can ask in faith and receive. On the lines below write your request and the Bible reference you choose as your authority.

.....

**12** We must ask God for all that we need in the name of Jesus. We must ask from a heart free from sin. In the list of Bible references given, one is a pattern for prayer. What do we usually call that pattern and where is it found?

.....

**13** Our posture during prayer seems to be a matter of personal choice. Some people stand up and some raise their hands. Others bow or kneel. Over a period of time we may do all of these. After reading the verses listed under *posture*, which statement would you say is correct?

- a)** Our posture in prayer must hold true to tradition.
- b)** The Bible gives us no set of rules for posture during prayer.

**14** Prayer is powerful. It draws us to God, transforms us into Christ's image, releases the power of the Holy Spirit within us. And our prayers are precious to God. What Scripture in the list given tells us that our prayers are as incense to Him?

.....



From this study you can see that prayer is communication with God. You talk to Him and He answers you. As you practice the Bible's teachings on prayer, your life will change.



You will receive great blessing from God and will have power to share the gospel with others.

Continue to learn about prayer. Add references to your study of prayer as you study other topics, for the main themes of the Bible are closely interwoven. Also, take time to listen to other people's experiences with prayer.

## Check Your Answers

---

- 1** It helps us find answers we need and also helps us balance Bible truths.
- 9 c)** We can pray anywhere and God will hear.
- 2** List Bible references.  
Group the references.  
Summarize the main points.
- 10 b)** but all receive answers from God.  
**a)** 1 Peter 3:7.  
**c)** 1 Peter 3:12.
- 11** Your own answer. It might be one like asking for wisdom on the basis of James 1:5.
- 4 a 2)** Hindrances to prayer  
**b 3)** How to pray  
**c 1)** Praise and thanksgiving  
**d 5)** When to pray
- 12** The Lord's Prayer. Matthew 6:9–13.
- 5 a)** False  
**b)** True  
**c)** True
- 6 a)** both day and night.  
**b)** continually.  
**c)** no matter how we feel.
- 13 b)** The Bible gives us no set of rules for posture during prayer.
- 7** God never slumbers nor sleeps. Revelation 5:8.
- 8 a)** Disobedience or hidden sin in our lives  
**b)** Asking for selfish reasons
- 3 a)** 1 Peter 3:7
- 14** Revelation 5:8