

The Purpose of Prayer

A Collection on Prayer, Volume One

The Purpose of Prayer

 **Precept®**

ISBN: 978-1-6368-721-62

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First Edition. August 2024

Designed in the United States. Printed in United States.

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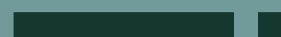
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Lesson One: Introduction



It is no secret that relationships take work. They need time, intentionality, and effort. They must be cultivated and nurtured. Relationships require constant humility and forgiveness. But at their best, they are worth it.

The same is true for our relationship with God. We are invited into deep intimacy with the Father because of all Jesus has done for us. Through His teaching and example, Jesus showed us a way to foster this nearness with the Father—prayer.

But even for lifelong Christians, prayer can become elusive, boring, or obligatory—and sometimes, all three. We believe we *should* pray. We may even *want* to pray. But we become lost in the *how* and *why* of it.

The goal of this Collection on Prayer is to return to the basics and explore all aspects of prayer. *What* is prayer? *Why* do we pray? And *How*? In this first volume, we will get to the heart of the matter—the purpose of prayer. Together we will turn to Scripture to uncover the reason we pray.

As you study, our prayer is that you will encounter the heart of the Father, grow in a loving relationship with Him, and find ways to commune with Him each day.



THE METHOD

We believe that relationship with God comes through knowing His Word. Studying the Bible allows us to know God deeply and live differently, being transformed into the image of Jesus.

We approach Bible study with a hands-on method. The Bible is thousands of years old, and it becomes easy to skim over strange stories or familiar verses without true understanding. To help you explore Scripture for yourself, we rely on the Precept Bible Study Method:

-  **Observe:** What does the text say?
-  **Interpret:** What does the text mean?
-  **Apply:** How should the meaning affect my life?

Taken together, these three components help you slow down, discover meaning, and find connections to your daily life.



WELCOME TO PRECEPT!

Scan the QR code to view a welcome video from one of our Precept team members.

THE METHOD //



observe



interpret



apply

OBSERVE

The purpose of observation is to understand what the text says. As you seek to observe Scripture carefully and accurately, the following tools will help.

Begin with Prayer

The Bible study process begins with prayer. Although prayer is often a missing or overlooked element, its importance cannot be overemphasized. No matter how good our method or tools, true understanding and life change only come through God.

Answer the 5Ws and an H

You will answer straightforward questions like *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* using a particular passage of text. These questions are the building blocks for detailed observation. Answering these questions will allow you to read *on purpose*, for the goal of understanding. This exercise will help you note the details of what you are reading so you won't miss anything. No special knowledge or insight is required.

Mark Key Words and Phrases

A key word is one that is essential to the text. Key words and phrases are repeated to convey the author's point or purpose for writing. To mark a key word or phrase, you will

visually distinguish it with a symbol, color, or combination of the two. Once marked, you will see at a glance where and how often the word or phrase appears. This step may also include making notes on comparisons, contrasts, or terms of conclusion. Marking may seem arbitrary in the moment, but it will help you pick up on themes and important points the author wants you to catch.

Make Lists

Making lists is to record all the details about something or someone in one place. Then you can review and reflect on everything you discover about a topic. This is most helpful when there is a lot of information scattered across several verses or chapters (for example, the miracles of Jesus or the story of creation).

Identify Chapter Themes

The theme of a chapter will center on the main person, event, teaching, or subject of that section of Scripture. Themes are often revealed by reviewing the key words and lists you developed.



THE METHOD

Scan the QR code to learn more about our
Bible Study Method.

INTERPRET

While observation leads to an accurate understanding of what the Word of God says, interpretation goes a step further to help you understand what it means. Thorough and careful observation flows into accurate interpretation. As you seek to interpret the Bible accurately, the following tools will be helpful.

Context

Scripture is a beautiful tapestry. When we observe a text, we focus on a small piece of the larger tapestry. We must also pay attention to the weave binding the material together. The context weaves throughout the entire biblical tapestry and binds it together. To discover the context, we will pay attention to the historical and cultural context, the surrounding verses, the theme and structure of the entire book, other passages across the Bible on the same topic, and the overall story of redemption in Scripture. It is important that we never take Scripture out of its context to make it say what we want it to say. Keeping context in mind enables us to discover what the author is saying rather than adding to their meaning.

Cross-References

Cross-references identify commonalities throughout different parts of Scripture. They allow us to trace the thread of common themes, words, events, or people. Studying cross-references helps us to seek the full counsel of the Word of God.

Word Studies

Our English Bibles vary from one translation to another. Different versions may use varying English words or phrases to translate a single Greek or Hebrew word. The tool of word studies helps us to accurately explore the meaning of a text by looking at the original Greek or Hebrew word behind the English word we are studying.

Sometimes interpretation is straightforward with an obvious answer. Other times, it's more nuanced. The Bible requires lifelong study, and the more you explore and meditate on Scripture, the more your understanding will grow day by day.

APPLY

Once you have seen what a text says and understood what it means, you can begin to consider how it affects your daily life. There are two primary ways we can apply the Scripture we read.

The first is a change of belief. Sometimes what you read will apply to matters of the heart or mind (and often, both). In this case, application takes us from simply knowing random facts to truly believing and living in light of that belief. Secondly, application leads to a change of behavior. Sometimes a text applies directly to something you can do or change externally in your life.

We will guide you through application with questions like:

What would change in your life if _____ were true?

What would be different in my life if I lived like God was _____?

How is your perspective on [current issue] affected by what you just read?

What steps can you take this week to _____?

Without application, Bible study is little more than an interesting academic exercise. This is where it is most important to involve others. Christians need other Christians, and you will find that your experience is richer and more enjoyable if you involve community in what you are learning.

A group discussion guide follows each week of study. We invite you to study alongside a group to help you reason through the Scriptures as you share ideas, discoveries, and prayers within your group.

And most importantly, it is essential that we involve the Spirit. Through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, true belief and real-life change begin to take place.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Before we begin Bible study, let's start by reflecting on some of your current thoughts and practices regarding prayer. Take some time to consider the questions below and write out your thoughts in the space provided or in your own journal. If you have other questions or hopes as you begin this study, reflect on those as well and express them to God.

1 // How do you pray? What do your prayer rhythms and routines currently look like?
If you don't currently have these rhythms and routines in place, don't worry! We will help you develop some throughout this study.

2 // Why do you pray?

3 // Think of the most important relationship in your life. Perhaps it is a family member, a best friend, or a spouse. What makes this relationship so special? How do you nurture it so that it grows and thrives? Why do you nurture it? How is this similar or different to how you treat your relationship with God?

4 // What are some obstacles or challenges to prayer in your life?

PRAY

One of the most important things about prayer is consistency—simply showing up. We will give you opportunities at the end of each lesson to turn to the Father in prayer. Today we have a guided prayer for you. Read through the words slowly, using them to guide your conversation with God.

Father God,

***You are the God of the universe,
the Creator of it all.
You are great, magnificent, and powerful.***

And yet . . .

***You see me. You know me. You love me.
And You want to be in communion with me.
May I always remember this.***

***As we begin this journey through Your Word,
May the truth that You desire an intimate relationship with me
continue to draw me back to You and Your heart,
each and every day.***

***Lord, I echo David's prayer to You,
Show me Your ways, my God.
Teach me Your path.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me.***

***I love You.
I can't wait to know You and love You even more.***

Amen.

OPENING GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

We have seen that genuine transformation and growth often involve other people. We encourage you to study alongside a group of believers. This study provides discussion questions along the way. As you begin your group this week, discuss your answers and reflections from the “Pause and Reflect” section on page 13 of your study.

Opening Questions: What are your hopes as you begin this study? What questions do you have for God regarding prayer?

1 // How do you pray? What do your rhythms and routines of prayer currently look like?

2 // Why do you pray?

3 // Think of the most important relationship in your life. Perhaps it is a family member, a best friend, or a spouse. What makes this relationship so special? How do you nurture it so that it grows and thrives? Why do you nurture it? How is this similar or different to how you treat your relationship with God?

4 // What are some obstacles or challenges to prayer in your life?

Closing: End your time together by asking each member of your group to share their personal prayer requests. Then, spend time praying for one another. Commit to praying for each other throughout the week.



LEADING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Scan the QR code to learn more about facilitating group discussions during your time in this Bible study.

