



The Promises of Prayer

A Collection on Prayer, Volume Two

The Promises of Prayer



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CONTENTS //

WEEK 1

7 // Lesson One: *Introduction*

18 // Opening Group Discussion
Questions

20 // Lesson Two: *Our Promise-Keeping*
God
2 Chronicles 6

26 // Lesson Three: *I Have Heard Your*
Prayer
2 Chronicles 7

32 // Lesson Four: *Our Part to Play*
2 Chronicles 7

40 // Lesson Five: *Prayer at a Glance*
2 Chronicles 6-7

42 // Week One: *Group Discussion*
Questions

WEEK 2

47 // Lesson Six: *Ask, Seek, Knock*
Matthew 7

54 // Lesson Seven: *Our Giving God*
Matthew 7

60 // Lesson Eight: *Confidence in Prayer*
1 John 5

66 // Lesson Nine: *According to His Will*
1 John 5

72 // Lesson Ten: *Prayer at a Glance*
Matthew 7; 1 John 5

74 // Week Two: *Group Discussion*
Questions

WEEK 3

79 // Lesson Eleven: *Ask in My Name*
John 14

84 // Lesson Twelve: *The Promised Holy*
Spirit
John 14

90 // Lesson Thirteen: *Life in the Spirit*
Romans 8

96 // Lesson Fourteen: *The Spirit*
Intercedes
Romans 8

102 // Lesson Fifteen: *Prayer at a Glance*
John 14; Romans 8

104 // Week Three: Group Discussion
Questions

WEEK 4

109 // Lesson Sixteen: I Will Send Him
to You
John 16

114 // Lesson Seventeen: Fullness of Joy
John 16

120 // Lesson Eighteen: The Father
Loves You
John 16

126 // Lesson Nineteen: Peace in Jesus
John 16

132 // Lesson Twenty: Prayer at a Glance
John 16

134 // Week Four: Group Discussion
Questions

CONCLUSION

142 // Closing Group Discussion
Questions

APPENDIX

144 // Scripture Observation Sheets

2 Chronicles 6–7

Matthew 7

1 John 5

John 14

Romans 8

John 16

164 // Prayer at a Glance

WEEK

K

1



Lesson One: Introduction



Welcome to Volume Two of our Collection on Prayer. Our goal is to explore all aspects of prayer: *What* is prayer? *Why* do we pray? and *How*?

In Volume One, we studied the purpose of prayer. We searched Scripture to uncover the reason we pray and found the invitation to grow in a loving relationship with God our Father through prayer.

In this volume, we will turn to God's Word to discover His promises surrounding prayer. We will explore God's faithful, promise-keeping nature and His pledge to hear and answer us when we turn to Him in prayer.

As we begin, we invite you to bring your questions, doubts, preconceptions, and experiences. Come as you are, knowing that God is ready and willing to meet you here as you discover what His Word teaches about prayer.

Our prayer for you is that throughout your time of study, you will encounter the heart of the Father and grow to trust His promises. We also pray you find ways to commune with Him, growing in a loving relationship with God through His Son 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?

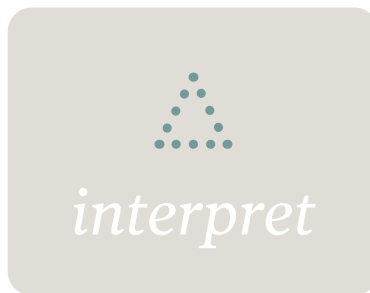
Taken together, these three components help you slow down, discover meaning, and find connections to your daily life.



WELCOME TO PRECEPT!

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

THE METHOD //



OBSERVE

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, we cannot overemphasize its importance. No matter how good our method or tools are, 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

What characteristics do you most value in a relationship? What comes to mind?

One of the most essential qualities of a strong and healthy relationship is **trust**. But it can also be difficult to come by.

We humans are not perfect at keeping promises. Far from it. Even with the best of intentions, we often let each other down. Building trust with one another takes time and intentionality, but breaking trust can happen in a moment.

Trust also matters in our relationship with God. It affects the way we approach Him in prayer. And it impacts our ability to lay down our lives at His feet in full surrender. But confidence in God can be difficult when we have experienced significant misplaced trust in our lives.

The good news?

We have a Father who always keeps His word, whose promises are always true, and who is eternally worthy of our trust.

Before we begin Bible study, let's start by reflecting on your current thoughts and feelings surrounding prayer, God, and His promises.

Take some time to consider the statements on the next pages and circle the phrase that most closely describes your belief about that statement. Remember, we are not looking for a "correct" answer but an honest and authentic one. Take your time to pause, reflect, ponder any questions you might have, and pray through each statement. Note your reflections in the space provided or in your own journal.

1 // God hears my prayers.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Reflection:

2 // God answers my prayers.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Reflection:

3 // God keeps His promises.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Reflection:

4 // God keeps His promises to me.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Reflection:

5 // How does your day-to-day life reflect (or not reflect) the beliefs you considered above?

PRAY

Bring your reflections to God in prayer. Be honest with Him about your thoughts and feelings, remembering that He knows you intimately and loves you unconditionally. Share with Him what you are struggling with and the things you are grateful for. Bring your questions, doubts, and hopes to Him as you begin your time in this study.

We encourage you to write out your prayers to keep your mind focused on God and to be able to look back and see all that God has done. You can use the space provided below or your own journal.

When you are finished, try to leave time for silence to allow God to speak to your heart, remembering that prayer is a two-way conversation.

OPENING GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

While studying God's Word is personal and individual, we have seen that life change and personal 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 reflections from the "Pause and Reflect" section on pages 15–16 of your study.

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

- 1 //** Do you believe God hears your prayers? Why or why not?
- 2 //** Do you believe God answers your prayers? Why or why not?
- 3 //** Do you believe God keeps His promises? Why or why not?
- 4 //** Do you believe God keeps His promises to *you*? Why or why not?
- 5 //** How does your day-to-day life reflect (or not reflect) the beliefs you considered above?

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.

