

PRAYER AND FASTING

Prayer and Fasting: Syllabus

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CLASS #1:

- I. Prayer:
 - A. What is Prayer?
 - B. Seven Considerations of Prayer.
 - C. Prayer Suggestions and Results: Prayer Suggestions.

CLASS #2:

- I. Prayer:
 - C. Prayer Results. (cont.)
 - D. Four Ways to Pray.
 - E. The Hour of Prayer: Study Mt 26:40.

CLASS #3:

- I. Prayer:
 - E. The Hour of Prayer: Types of Prayer.

CLASS #4:

- I. Prayer:
 - F. An Exercise in Prayer;
 - G. The Apostle Paul and Prayer.

CLASS #5:

- II. Fasting.
 - Exam.

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Prayer and Fasting: Exam

Possible 20 Point Questions

- 1) Choose four of the “Prayer is...” statements and use them to define prayer (p. 87).
- 2) List and describe four ways to pray. Include a Scripture reference for each one (p. 91).
- 3) Choose three of the types of prayer in the “hour of power” and define and describe how to do each one (pp. 93-98).

Possible 10 Point Questions

- 1) List the seven Considerations of prayer found in Mt 6:9-13 (p. 88).
- 2) Give two suggestions concerning prayer (pp. 88, 89).
- 3) Describe two results of prayer (p. 90).
- 4) Draw the hour of power clock (p. 93).
- 5) List three Scriptures that represent prayers of Paul (p. 99).
- 6) List two results of fasting and include a Scripture reference for each (p. 101).

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I. Prayer.

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Author's Comment:

Someone once said, "Christians do not gossip. They just share prayer requests." Unfortunately, the implication of this joke is very real in some parts of the church. Some people consider prayer as being nothing more than a part of their social lives. They think of it as a tool of manipulation. Nevertheless, prayer is not at all like these notions.

A. What is Prayer?

1. **Prayer Is Humility.** Prayer is the thing that says to God: "I can not do it, but you can." Jn 3:30
2. **Prayer Is Reliance.** Prayer is the thing that says to God: "I need you in all my ways." Prov 3:5, 6
3. **Prayer Is Trust.** Prayer is the thing that says to God: "I deposit my time in your bank." Lk 11:10; Jn 15:4
4. **Prayer Is Relationship.** Prayer is the thing that says to God: "I have decided to share with you my problems, my desires, my joys, and my dreams. Most importantly, I have decided to share my time with you." 1 Jn 1:3
5. **Prayer Is Faith.** Prayer is the thing that says to God: "I realize that you are there. I believe that you hear me and that you will answer me." Heb 11:6, Jms 1:6
6. **Prayer Is Love.** Prayer is the thing that says to God: "I have decided to receive your love and to show you my love through the time I spend with you." Rom 8:15
7. **Prayer Is the Correct Perception of Yourself.** Prayer is the thing that says to God: "I am the creation. You are the Creator." Jn 3:30; Rom 9:20

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B. Seven Considerations of Prayer.

1. Study Mt 6:9-13 to examine the seven considerations of how to pray.
2. Seven Considerations regarding prayer (in English they are called the seven P's).
 - a. Praise (vs. 9).
 - b. Petition (vs. 10).
 - c. Provision (vs. 11).
 - d. Pardon (receive from God--vs. 12).
 - e. Pardon (give to others--vs. 12).
 - f. Protection (vs. 13).
 - g. Proclamation (vs. 13b).

C. Prayer Suggestions and Results.

1. Prayer Suggestions.
 - a. Be simple enough to pray as a child. Pray with the trust and dependence of a child.
 - b. Study the topic of prayer enough to be able to pray more effectively. However, remember that prayer is learned by doing it.
 - c. Avoid selfish prayers (Jms 4:3).
 - d. Make big requests to a big God (he can handle everything).
 - e. Make little requests of a personal God. He is interested in the details of your life.
 - f. To pray **in** the name of Jesus, we must pray according to the will of God. First pray to know the will of God. Then, make the request in the name of Jesus (1 Jn 5:14, 15).

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- g. Pray with faith and confidence. Trust God (Jn 14:13, 14; Jn 16:23; and Mt 18:19, 20).
- h. Confess all sins as soon as possible (Ps 66:18).
- i. It is very important to remain in Christ and to obey Him (Jn 15:7; 1 Jn 3:22).
- j. We need to plan a specific time each day to pray (Mk 1:35; Dan 6:10; and Lk 5:16).
- k. More importantly, we need to develop the attitude of prayer. We must live a life of prayer that seeks to be in communion with God constantly (Prov 3:6; 1 Thes 5:17; and Eph 6:18).
- l. Prayer must be specific. The more specific the prayer, the more specific the answer.
- m. Remember that there is a cost to prayer.
 - 1) Many times, the greater the cost, the greater the reward (see Lk 21:1-4).
 - 2) For example, there is a great cost connected to early morning prayer, all night prayer, and prayer and fasting. However, many times the results are greater also.
- n. Be intimate with God. Talk to Him in a personal way.
 - 1) Be natural before God.
 - 2) Be honest and transparent (He knows everything anyway!).
 - 3) Do not pray repetitive, religious prayers. Try to avoid empty rituals.
 - 4) Be sure to take time to listen to God.
 - 5) Establish a minimum daily time to pray.
 - 6) Do not feel condemned when you lack the desire to pray. Pray anyway. The desire will follow.

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2. Prayer Results.

- a. There is a sense of peace and security that comes from spending time with God (Phil 4:6).
- b. Prayer keeps us broken and humble before God. Thus, there is a greater sense of God's favor (1 Pt 5:5; Mt 23:12).
- c. Prayer helps us avoid temptation (Mt 26:41).
- d. Prayer gives us an increased perception of **total** reality. It enables us to see the invisible dimension of reality (2 Kgs 6:17; 2 Cor 4:18).
- e. Prayer gives us a greater sense of success and confidence (2 Chron 26:5).
- f. Prayer gives us a greater sense of intimacy and closeness to God.
- g. Prayer enables us to know God and His ways. Knowing someone's ways is a result of spending a lot of time with that person. It is the same with God.
- h. Prayer helps us to die to self. It helps us to develop selflessness as we focus our prayers on others.
- i. Prayer brings us into unity with others (those that we pray with and those that we pray for).
- j. Prayer helps us to know the purposes and will of God.
- k. God answers prayer.
- l. There is joy in the presence of God through prayer.

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D. Four Ways to Pray.

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1. Private Prayer.
 - a. All other ways of praying begin here. It is the foundational way (see Mt 6:6).
 - b. It is important to have an “inner room.”
 - c. The results of the prayers of individuals are great (Jms 5:16).
2. Two Believers Praying in Agreement.
 - a. Consider Mt 18:19.
 - b. The focus is on harmony. To pray in agreement is to be in unity.
 - c. The most natural example of this is the husband and wife praying together.
3. Prayer in Small Groups.
 - a. Consider Mt 18:20.
 - b. The Methodist revival in England was a result of the prayers of small groups.
 - c. Strong relationships are formed in small prayer groups.
4. Congregational Prayer (the whole church).
 - a. Consider Acts 1:4, 14; and 12:5, 12.
 - b. Remember, the first church was a prayer meeting (Acts 1:14).

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E. The Hour of Prayer (used by permission of Dick Eastman).¹

1. Study Mt 26:40.
 - a. Jesus asked his disciples, “Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?”
 - b. Jesus asks us the same question today. Can we give one hour of our day to prayer?

Author’s Illustration:

The average North American watches more than four hours of television every day. Yet some of these very same people say that they do not have time to pray. Think about your daily schedule. Consider some of the things that you do for an hour or more each day. Certainly, prayer is more important than many (if not all) of those things. The words of Jesus’ question continue to echo throughout the ages: “Can you give Me one hour of your time?” He is waiting for your answer!

Insert Your Illustration:

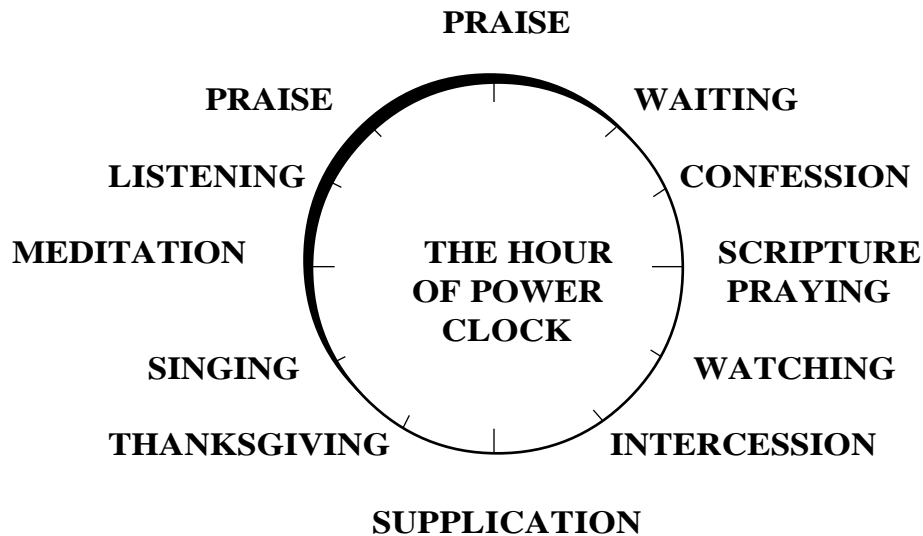
- c. Sometimes it is difficult to pray for one hour.
 - d. It is helpful to use different types of prayer. Praying in a variety of ways can help us to pray longer.

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Discussion Point

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Use the following diagram and explanations (used by permission from Dick Eastman)¹ to promote variety in your prayers and to pray for one hour. Five minutes should be spent in each type of prayer.



2. Types of Prayer.

a. Praise--the action of divine adoration.

- 1) Choose a specific theme (the greatness of God, His justice, His mercy, etc.).
- 2) Proclaim all that God is with respect to that theme.

b. Waiting--the action of surrender.

- 1) Allow yourself to rest in complete silence.
- 2) Think only about God. Think about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- 3) Focus on the love of God.
- 4) Focus on your commitment to give yourself to God.

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- c. Confession--the action of admitting that you are a sinner in need of God's grace.
 - 1) Use Ps 139:23, 24.
 - 2) Confess your sins.
 - 3) Confess your need for the guidance and anointing of the Holy Spirit.
- d. Pray according to the Scriptures--the action of standing on the word.
 - 1) Just as we pray for the blessing over our physical food, we should begin with a prayer for blessing over our spiritual food.
 - 2) Examine one passage of the Bible. Pray according to the promises, commandments, and implications of the passage.
 - 3) Use the prayers of the Bible. Pray the prayer as your own prayer.
 - a) Prayer for victory (2 Chron 13:14).
 - b) Prayer for a child (Gen 15:1-6).
 - c) Prayer for those in authority (1 Tim 2:1, 2).
 - d) Prayer for guidance (Gen 24:12-52; 2 Sam 2:1; Judg 13:8-15).
 - e) Prayer for revelation (Acts 10:1-33; Eph 1:17-23).
 - f) Prayer for knowledge (Dan 2:17-23).
 - g) Prayer for blessing (2 Sam 7:18-29; 2 Chron 30:27).
 - h) Prayer for help (1 Sam 23:10-13).
 - i) Prayer for grace (Ps 25:16).
 - j) Prayer for courage (Acts 4:24-31).
 - k) Prayer for proof of the calling (Judg 6:36-40).

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- l) Prayer for health (2 Kgs 20:1-11).
 - m) Prayer for prosperity (1 Chron 4:10).
 - n) Prayer for protection (2 Chron 20:5-12, 27).
 - o) Prayer for the glory of the Father (Jn 12:28).
 - p) Prayer for the Church (Jn 17:1-26).
 - q) Prayer for freedom (Mt 26:39, 42, 44; 27:46).
 - r) Prayer for safety on a trip (Ezra 8:21, 23).
 - s) Prayer for understanding (Gen 25:22, 23; Eph 3:17-19).
 - t) Prayer for strength (Judg 16:29, 30; Eph 3:16).
 - u) Prayer for wisdom (1 Kgs 3:6-14).
- e. Watch--the action of mental awareness.
- 1) Be spiritually alert. Consider the methods of attack that Satan might use against you and claim the power of God to be able to overcome the enemy.
 - 2) Consider world events. Pray with compassion through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

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f. Intercession--the action of praying for others.

- 1) Ask for a greater burden for others.
- 2) Focus on four areas:
 - a) Pray for more workers to be sent out into the harvest.
 - b) Pray for open doors of ministry for those workers.
 - c) Pray for fruit to come from their ministries.
 - d) Pray for financial resources to assist the ministries.
- 3) Include specific countries and their leaders in your prayers.

g. Supplication--the action of praying for yourself.

- 1) Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to pray according to the will of God.
- 2) Consider your schedule for the day and the corresponding needs.
- 3) Talk with God about these needs and explain your requests.
- 4) Examine your motives. Make sure that they are pure.

h. Give thanks--the action of expressing your appreciation.

- 1) Consider all of the things that God has done for you over the last few days.
- 2) Offer specific thanks for:
 - a) Spiritual blessings.
 - b) Material blessings.
 - c) Physical blessings.

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- 3) Give thanks in anticipation of future blessings.
- 4) Every day try to give thanks for something that you have never before given thanks for.
- i. Singing--the action of worship with a melody.
 - 1) Choose a special theme.
 - 2) Sing a song about that theme.
 - 3) Ask that God would give you a “new song” from the Spirit.
- j. Meditate--the action of spiritual evaluation.
 - 1) Choose a special theme. Concentrate on specific points within that theme.
 - 2) Consider different angles of each point.
 - 3) Ask yourself questions and use the Bible to search for the answer.
- k. Listening--the action of receiving from God (both mentally and spiritually).
 - 1) Ask God specific questions. Be specific. Ask for direction and understanding. Ask God to show you how to solve problems.
 - 2) Search and examine the Bible.
 - 3) Evaluate the circumstances of various situations. Ask God to give you wisdom and understanding. Ask Him to share His plan with you and to give you directions.
 - 4) Be sensitive to the Spirit. Listen. Write down the things that you believe God is saying to you.

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1. Praise--the action of divine magnification.
 - 1) Specifically, praise God for His greatness. Focus on His:
 - a) Omnipotence.
 - b) Perfect wisdom.
 - c) Constant presence.
 - 2) Praise God for the opportunity to spend time with Him. Praise Him for the past hour and that He has heard your prayers.
 - 3) End the hour in a spirit of rejoicing. Ask God to go ahead of you and offer a final hallelujah and a strong amen!

An Exercise in Prayer:

Form groups of five or six people.

Draw on the blackboard (or somewhere where all can see it) the “hour of power” circle. Each person should have the notes on the twelve types of prayer in front of him.

Use one hour of the class time to pray. Use the notes as a guide. Do not feel like you must do everything that is in the notes. Be led by the Spirit!

Encourage all of the students to use what they have learned and to spend an hour in prayer every morning. In the beginning of the remaining classes, allow some time for students to share testimonies about what is happening in their prayer time.

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The Apostle Paul and Prayer:

We learn from Paul in many different areas. Prayer is an area that the apostle Paul was especially strong in. Paul lived a life of prayer and encouraged others to do the same. We can learn more about prayer through a systematic study of his prayers.

Study, Meditate Upon, and Use the following topical list of the prayers of Paul to pray for yourself and others.

- 1) For right living (2 Cor 13:7; Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:9, 10; 1 Thes 3:12, 13; 1 Thes 5:23; and 2 Thes 1:11).
- 2) For greater knowledge through experience:
 - Of the Lord Himself (Eph 1:17; Col 1:9, 10).
 - Of His will (Phil 1:9, 10; Col 1:9).
 - Of His love (Eph 3:17-19; 2 Thes 3:5).
 - Of the Hope of the Gospel (Eph 1:18; Rom 15:13).
 - Of the resources that we have through the gospel (Eph 1:18; Philemon 6).
 - Of His power (Eph 1:18, 19).
- 3) For strengthening (Eph 3:16, 17; Col 1:10, 11; 1 Thes 3:13; and 2 Thes 2:16).
- 4) For ministry opportunity and success (Rom 1:9-11; 1 Thes 3:10; Rom 15:30, 31; Philemon 6; Col 1:10; and 2 Thes 1:11).
- 5) For more love (Phil 1:9; 1 Thes 3:12).
- 6) For Christians to live and worship in unity (Rom 15:5,6).
- 7) For grace and peace (2 Thes 3:16; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 4:23; Col 1:2; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 6:21; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; and Philemon 3).
- 8) For Israel's salvation (Rom 10:1).
- 9) For Christ to dwell in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:14-17).
- 10) For the fullness of God (Eph 3:17-19).

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Discussion Point

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What are some of the things we can learn from Paul's prayer life?

II. Fasting.

A. A Bible Study about Fasting.

1. Occasions of fasting.
 - a. Public Disasters (1 Sam 31:11-13).
 - b. Private Emotions (1 Sam 1:7).
 - c. Grief (2 Sam 12:16).
 - d. Anxiety (Dan 6:18-20).
 - e. Potential danger (Esther 4:16).
 - f. National repentance (1 Sam 7:5, 6).
 - g. Sad news (Neh 1:4).
 - h. Sacred ordination (Acts 13:3).
2. Things that accompany fasting.
 - a. Prayer (Lk 2:37).
 - b. Confession (Neh 9:1, 2).
 - c. Mourning (Joel 2:12).
 - d. Humiliation (Neh 9:1).
 - e. Distress (Ps 69:10).
 - f. Humility (Ps 35:13).

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3. Safeguards or warnings for fasting.

- a. Do not display your time of fasting (Mt 6:16-18).
- b. Focus your fasting on God (Zech 7:5).
- c. Consider the true meaning of fasting (Is 58:1-14).

4. Results of fasting.

- a. Divine guidance (Judg 20:26).
- b. Victory over temptation (Mt 4:1-11).

5. Some examples of fasting.

- a. Moses (Ex 34:27, 28); Israelites (Judg 20:26).
- b. Samuel (1 Sam 7:5, 6); David (2 Sam 12:16); Elijah (1 Kgs 19:8).
- c. Ninevites (Jonah 3:5-8).
- d. Nehemiah (Neh 1:4).
- e. Darius (Dan 6:9, 18); Daniel (Dan 9:3).
- f. Jesus (Mt 4:1, 2).
- g. John's disciples and the Pharisees (Mk 2:18); Anna (Lk 2:36, 37).
- h. Early Christians (Acts 13:2); Apostles (2 Cor 6:4, 5); Paul (2 Cor 11:27).

Discussion Point

Use the previous concepts to promote an open discussion about fasting.

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Author's Comments on Fasting:

Fasting can be thought of as a channel through which God can work in your life. To fast is to prepare the way for God. It is to make yourself more available to hear from God and to be used by God.

I have received critical guidance at transitional times of my life through fasting. I have also found that fasting has had its greatest results when I fast for at least five days.

Fasting highlights the sense of my desperate need for God. I feel this need physically, which helps me to feel it spiritually. It also highlights my sense of appreciation for God. I appreciate more what I sometimes take for granted (both physical food and spiritual food).

Do not allow fasting to become an empty ritual or a legalistic burden. Be led by the Holy Spirit. He will show you when it is time to fast. At times, He may show you to fast systematically (once every week, every other weekend). Whatever the case, do not fast unless you are led to fast and your heart is in it.

Your Comments on Fasting:

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Prayer and Fasting: Endnotes

¹Dick Eastman, Based on notes and teachings from Dick Eastman's "Prayer Seminar," 1986. From The Hour That Changes the World by Dick Eastman, Baker Book House Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI, U.S.A. - Used by permission.

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