

“Lord Teach Us To Pray”
A Study in the Exposition of the Prayers of Paul: Praying for One Another¹
One Week Study Guide

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DAY ONE

INTRODUCTION: Praying for One Another

It is artificially generous to state that most people do not like all other people all of the time. The truth is that on some level with various degrees of frequency and exposure to various persons and groups this is true of all of us. The reason for this is that the world is populated by sinners - us and them. The difference between the "us" side of the equation is that we are sinners who have been forgiven and are in various degrees of progress with being conformed to the Savior. However, we still have a lot of "us" left over and it can occasionally be unattractive, distasteful, offensive, and even hurtful to others - including those within the church context. This occasionally has led to persons breaking fellowship with one local church body and finding another one that has yet to have gotten involved in their life enough to also offend them (if they stay they either overlook matters as they should, forgive as they should, or simply are weary of moving). Now, because there is all too much of all of "us" left over and because time and experience will eventually make it plain that we are all very different we must make a decision. That decision is to operate as local manifestations of the greater family of God, the Church. Included in this decision is the reality that families of this nature are constituted by a whole variety of persons knitted together by more than common social constructs, personal interest, economic success/weakness, race, intelligence, experience, etc. Truthfully, the only means by which such a family was constituted was by the common element of salvation in Christ (past-justification, ongoing-sanctification, and future-glorification).² So, recognizing that the local church is effectively an eclectic, but gospel-centered family, several things must be determined and among the most important are: what is the responsibility of the local church to the Lord, to itself, and to others? The answer to this must be what shapes the identity and conduct of the local church - further, it must be the means of insulating it from the temptations of mission creep (drifting into matters of real or possible value that do not satisfy the actual aim and responsibilities of the church).

¹ Prepared by David Crowe for Pray's Mill Baptist Church Adult Sunday School

ALL Scripture Quotations are from the ESV Bible unless the Scripture reference is in a quote from another author – their original translation was kept.

² I am at risk of oversimplifying to make my larger point. The truth is that we do not cavalierly identify with any and all who claim Christ. There is a responsibility to also maintain doctrinal integrity in our most intimate associations in the context of identifying with a local church. We are not ecumenical evangelicals that give no thought or attention to the responsibility to be clear in the Scriptures and to identify under the Pastoral authority, shepherding, and care of a local church that best honors these matters. It cannot be presumed or expected to find perfect continuity, but it should be present in great strength and consistency.

With this in view a very simple paradigm that we can use and that was provided by Jesus, the head of the Church, is to examine the two greatest commandments.

“The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:29-31

It is clear that Jesus was not identifying these two commandments in any order short of their respectful prioritization (anything less than prioritizing love of God over love of anything/anyone else would be idolatry). Further, it is also clear that while not under the Mosaic Law that the Church is under the Law of Christ which is accurately reflected in these two prior commandments - loving God and loving others (particularly the family of faith). Now, having identified the family of faith (the Church) and our primary responsibilities within this relationship (loving one another) we can provide a very tangible application of love for one another within the context of the local church: praying for one another. Beseeking our heavenly Father, to whom our chief love is applied, in petition for our fellow brothers and sisters in the faith is one of the most robust and consistent demonstrations of loving one another. Further, it could reasonably be argued that one who is not praying for others is demonstrating not love, but a profound selfishness rooted in either indifference or laziness, perhaps both, and is thereby failing to fulfill the law of Christ.

"We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother." 1 John 4:19-21

We have addressed that praying for others is a proper manifestation of loving others, but we also need to be mindful to pray what is best for others. Unfortunately, what is "best for others" and especially what is "best for ourselves" has suffered a woefully diminished threshold. Suffering and struggle may be best. Not having all that we would desire may be best. Certainly, vigorously pursuing Christ-likeness will be best. Certainly, seeking that God is glorified by my inner man and outward actions will be best. Certainly, seeing the submission of faith and praising of God among all peoples will be best. We must be vigilant to examine our prayers to seek that we might go forward striving to pray what is best in view of God's perspective.

Now we examine the Scriptures together. D.A. Carson points out what an intentional student of the New Testament will plainly see, particularly when your attention has been awakened to the matter, that Paul gives copious amounts of attention to others in his prayers. Further, while there is significant declarations of thanksgiving for other the majority of his praying for/about others is in the form of petition. However, these petitions are not casual, mundane, or fixed on the temporal, but are secured in matters of eternal consequence, for the people's greatest joy in Christ, and for the Lord's glory made manifest in their lives. So how do we learn to pray for others in a like matter? First, we make like the Psalm 1 man and drive our roots deep in truth; and second, we draw from the examples

provided for us - primarily in the Scriptures as these are inspired examples. To this end I will provide 27 passages in which we observe Paul's prayers for others.³

As you read through each of the prayers for the respective days of the study select no less than two passages and write out the following observations and responses in the Personal Application section that day. I intentionally provided a minimal statement about each passage in hopes that you will do the work of drawing out some of the wonderful truths of the text to the end that they would inform, mature, and change your own life of prayer.

1. What was Paul's petition(s) for the believers for whom he was praying?
2. What biblical principles or theology informed his prayers?
3. Did Paul express a love, affection, or genuine care for the believers in this prayer? If so, how?
4. Identify two to four key words - what made them distinct in their communication/impact?
5. What example did Paul provide that you can apply in your own prayers - things to change (perhaps less emphasis on certain matters and more emphasis on other matters)?

DAY ONE (Scriptures)

In Paul's personal introduction in his letter to the believers in Rome he shares that he has been faithfully praying for them.

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you." Romans 1:8-10

Paul expresses his heart's great anguish over his unbelieving kinsmen.

"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved."
Romans 10:1

Among Paul's exhortations is the charge to be constant in prayer.

"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." Romans 12:12

While a very short statement, this is a clear example of petition and encouragement for the Romans.

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 15:5-6

Another very short statement, but a clear example of petition and encouragement for the Romans.

³ This list was originally assimilated for this very purpose by D.A. Carson in his book that has been cited throughout this study guide and can be found in its entirety including the very few passages that I chose not to include on pages 49-55).
Primary Source: A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Praying with Paul; D.A. Carson; Baker Academic, 2014; (Hereafter: Carson)

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Romans 15:13

Paul here appeals for the Roman believers to join him in striving with him in prayer for the work the Lord has entrusted him – he clearly saw the value in a company of believers laboring together in prayer.

"I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. May the God of peace be with you all. Amen." Romans 15:30-33

APPLICATION IN THE SCRIPTURES

Select two to three passages from today's section and write out the following observations and responses in the spaces provided.

1. What was Paul's petition(s) for the believers for whom he was praying?
2. What biblical principles or theology informed his prayers?
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4. Identify two to four key words - what made them distinct in their communication/impact?
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Passage: _____

My Observations and Responses:

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Passage: _____

My Observations and Responses:

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Passage: _____

My Observations and Responses:

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APPLICATION IN PRAYER

Use the passages that you selected as a template and your own “observations and responses” that you gleaned in this time and spend some time in like-minded prayer with the text of Scripture.

DAY TWO

Paul shares of his thanksgiving to God for the Corinthian believers and unpacks what this thanksgiving consists of.

"I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

Here Paul is affirming God’s praiseworthiness (or as Jesus put it, “hallowed be your name.”⁴) and establishing a proper foundation of thinking with this act.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort." 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Again, Paul is affirming God’s praiseworthiness in the context of victory in Christ and how this looks in this present age.

"But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

Here Paul is primarily providing testimony, but with this there is articulation of thanks to God and the personal relationships of prayer.

"For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! " 2 Corinthians 9:12-15

⁴ Matthew 6:9

Paul speaks to the Corinthians as a pastor and to the matter of prayer.

"But we pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for." 2 Corinthians 13:7-9

Paul demonstrates with great clarity the rich biblical roots from which his prayers of thanksgiving for the believers is drawn.

"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." Ephesians 1:15-23

Paul articulates why he prays for the church – for their maturing in Christ; and then he concludes with a doxological praise.

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Ephesians 3:14-21

APPLICATION IN THE SCRIPTURES

Select two to three passages from today's section and write out the following observations and responses in the spaces provided.

1. What was Paul's petition(s) for the believers for whom he was praying?
2. What biblical principles or theology informed his prayers?
3. Did Paul express a love, affection, or genuine care for the believers in this prayer? If so, how?
4. Identify two to four key words - what made them distinct in their communication/impact?
5. What example did Paul provide that you can apply in your own prayers - things to change (perhaps less emphasis on certain matters and more emphasis on other matters)?

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APPLICATION IN PRAYER

Use the passages that you selected as a template and your own “observations and responses” that you gleaned in this time and spend some time in like-minded prayer with the text of Scripture.

DAY THREE

Paul is both modeling and requesting prayer – a natural and loving discipline of the church.

"...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak." Ephesians 6:18-20

Paul articulates directly how he is praying for this beloved church – having a view to their sanctification and the Lord’s glory.

"And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." Philippians 1:9-11

Pastoral counsel finds one of its chief applications in driving you to prayer, Paul does no less here.

"...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

Paul is overlapping testimony with theologically robust praying – a wonderful demonstration of applying love for the body in life and in prayer.

"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Colossians 1:3-14

Paul is operating off of the New Testament presumption that Christians pray, and in view of this he provides the Colossian believers ways in which they can effectively pray for his own gospel labors.

"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak." Colossians 4:2-4

Paul loved the Thessalonian believers as is plainly demonstrated by his conduct: constantly mentioning them in his prayers.

"We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

An element of Paul's prayerful gratitude is that that gospel was received as it should have been – the effectual word of God.

"And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers." 1 Thessalonians 2:13

APPLICATION IN THE SCRIPTURES

Select two to three passages from today's section and write out the following observations and responses in the spaces provided.

1. What was Paul's petition(s) for the believers for whom he was praying?
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APPLICATION IN PRAYER

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DAY FOUR

Paul continues to model a life of prayer that reflects the high priority that it deserves, and he demonstrates elements of thanksgiving and petition that are God-centered and Christ-exalting.

“For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.” 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Paul provides a prayerful benediction with a view to our blessed hope.

“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

A precise articulation of why Paul is praying for the Thessalonians – elements that will culminate in glory.

“To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

While a precise request, Paul is also providing a transferable model on how to pray for those advancing the gospel.

“Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.” 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

Paul clearly puts an emphasis on praying for those within the church and their work, but he calls on believers to be faithful to pray for all people.

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” 1 Timothy 2:1-4

A demonstration of faithful service: being a man/woman of constant prayer.

“I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.” 2 Timothy 1:3

Paul, ever faithfully praying for a wide range of believers, maintains a sharp consistency in praying for their greatest good (beyond the temporal) and God’s greatest glory.

“I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.” Philemon 4-6

APPLICATION IN THE SCRIPTURES

Select two to three passages from today's section and write out the following observations and responses in the spaces provided.

- 6. What was Paul's petition(s) for the believers for whom he was praying?
- 7. What biblical principles or theology informed his prayers?
- 8. Did Paul express a love, affection, or genuine care for the believers in this prayer? If so, how?
- 9. Identify two to four key words - what made them distinct in their communication/impact?
- 10. What example did Paul provide that you can apply in your own prayers - things to change (perhaps less emphasis on certain matters and more emphasis on other matters)?

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APPLICATION IN PRAYER

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DAY FIVE

Another element that Carson brings to our attention is that when we set ourselves to the faithful labor of prayer it may very well be an exercise in ineffectiveness on account of self-imposed or self-retained obstructions. To be direct, one's sin may be adversely impacting the effectiveness of one's prayers. Carson approaches this threat from two primary directions: grave and unrepentant sins as demonstrated through the book of Malachi, and personal bitterness and resentment as addressed throughout the New Testament.

Obstructions to prayer as addressed through the prophet Malachi.⁵

Malachi 1:6-14 "Half-hearted religion that offers God second best."⁶

Malachi 2:13-16 "Meaningless tears of repentance while adultery and divorce abound."⁷

Malachi 3:5 "Abysmal absence of the fear of God, a lack that issues in the corruption and the oppression of the poor and unfortunate."⁸

Malachi 3:13-15 "A wretched hankering after the ways of the arrogant and the evildoers of society, nurtured by a whispered suspicion that it is futile to serve God."⁹

Obstructions to prayer because of resentment/bitterness within the church body.

"But notoriously, what so often cuts us off from effective intercession is sheer bitterness, nurtured resentment, nicely preserved grudges, a desperate want of forgiveness."¹⁰

This disposition of anger, hurt, bitterness, resentment, anger, etc. is not consistent with loving the body of Christ and must be decisively dealt with in one's own heart and as is proper with the other party or parties involved too. Consider the following passages and examine what they would require of you.

"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Matthew 6:14-15

"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." Mark 11:25

"Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Romans 12:17-18

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

Colossians 3:12-13

⁵ The entirety of this section was taken from Carson's book, page 56 and were reformatted for this Study Guide

⁶ Carson, Pg.56

⁷ Carson, Pg.56

⁸ Carson, Pg.56

⁹ Carson, Pg.56

¹⁰ Carson, Pg.56

"If you are serious about reforming your prayer life, you must begin with your heart. Unconfessed sin, nurtured sin, will always be a barrier between God and those he has made in his image."¹¹

APPLICATION IN THE SCRIPTURES

The Scriptures are clear that at the point of salvation the believer is justified (declared righteous in Christ) and has a new heart that now has the capacity to walk in obedience. However, it is also quite clear that there is a progressive dynamic to sanctification and we must continually be a people of repentance, a people who are mortifying our sin, and a people intentionally growing in grace. When there is a failure in this process (i.e. when we love our sin and choose it over obedience) we obstruct our fellowship with God and our prayers will suffer accordingly. Carson has drawn this out through Scriptures in Malachi.

Have you examined your heart for sinful obstructions to your discipline of prayer? _____

Are there matters that you need to address so that your prayers might not continue to suffer obstruction? If yes, how will you engage these problems? If no, how might you preserve yourself from such problems in the future?

Another element of obstruction in prayer is bitterness/resentment within the church body. This is especially egregious as the Scriptures so plainly and consistently call on the church to love its members. Though an all too common struggle/problem, the Scriptures are clear in their requirements and means of help.

Examining the five provided passages, what would you say the Scriptures would require of us in terms of this obstruction to our prayers? How will you respond?

APPLICATION IN PRAYER

Review your answers and take necessary action in prayer or engage whatever obstructions are impeding your prayers so that as you grow in your understanding you might also grow in your actions too.

¹¹ Carson, Pg.57

