

Prayer and Providence

Introductory Thoughts

This quarter we will be studying the subject of prayer and its importance in a Christian's life. But more than that, I want us to really grow together in our prayer lives. I suspect if you ask most Christians whether they need to improve on that, their answer will be a definite 'yes.' As we begin our study, be thinking about what aspects of your prayer life most need improvement – constancy, focus, sincerity, ability to express yourself, etc. Learning to pray is a journey, and I don't believe we can ever really say we've arrived. My aim is to help you along that journey as we seek to tap prayer's full potential in our lives and in our relationship with God.

Closely coupled to prayer is the concept of God's providence. Many in the world today misunderstand God's providence, or worse, they discount it altogether. Very little is said directly about providence in the Bible, but the reality of it is woven throughout scripture. We'll take a careful look at the subject to deepen our understanding and to grow in our trust of God's providential care. And as we consider our prayer lives, we'll see the vital connections between that and God's providence.

The next page provides an outline and schedule of the topics we'll cover this quarter. The topics generally follow the chapters in Homer Hailey's book, "Prayer and Providence." The book does a good job of dealing with these subjects, and I'll be sharing some of Hailey's thoughts and key points as we study together. I've also created a daily reading guide for you from the Psalms; these serve as an excellent study guide on how to pray. Let me encourage you to read one of these each day and make the psalmist's prayer your prayer.

I've also included another resource that may be helpful – the table of contents from Herbert Lockyer's devotional study "All the Prayers of the Bible." This book contains most of the prayers of the Bible as well as other discussions about prayer in scripture. The title of each reading is insightful and may serve as a good reference as you study prayer in the Bible.

I hope you enjoy our study together!

Jeff Stewart

Prayer and Providence

Lesson Plan

Lesson #	Date	Lesson Title
1	9/1/24	What is Prayer?
2	9/8/24	Learning to Pray
3	9/15/24	The Constancy of Prayer
4	9/22/24	Praying for Others
5	9/29/24	Prayer in Time of Trouble
---	10/6/24	(Gospel Meeting)
6	10/13/24	When God Says 'No' or 'Wait'
7	10/20/24	What do I Expect When I Pray?
8	10/27/24	Providence - God is Able
9	11/3/24	Providence and the Problem of Evil
10	11/10/24	God is in Control
11	11/17/24	Providence and the Nations
12	11/24/24	Providence and the Individual

The lessons for this quarter are based on some of the chapters from Homer Hailey's book, "Prayer and Providence"

Learning to Pray From the Psalms

We can learn a lot about prayer from reading many of the psalms. Below are some readings for each day this quarter. As you read them, try to make the prayers within these your own prayers. Make the psalmist's expressions to God your expressions while fitting the thoughts to your own circumstances today. Also, see if you can change your typical prayer pattern to have more variety of expression; these should help expand your prayer vocabulary.

Week 1	
Psalms of Trust and Assurance	
09/01/24 Sun	3
09/02/24 Mon	16
09/03/24 Tue	23
09/04/24 Wed	27
09/05/24 Thu	28
09/06/24 Fri	31
09/07/24 Sat	56
Week 2	
Individual Lament Psalms	
09/08/24 Sun	
09/09/24 Mon	6
09/10/24 Tue	13
09/11/24 Wed	26
09/12/24 Thu	38
09/13/24 Fri	39
09/14/24 Sat	42
Week 3	
Thanksgiving Psalms: God's Mercies	
09/15/24 Sun	30
09/16/24 Mon	66
09/17/24 Tue	75
09/18/24 Wed	103
09/19/24 Thu	116
09/20/24 Fri	118
09/21/24 Sat	138
Week 4	
Psalms of Penitence	
09/22/24 Sun	6
09/23/24 Mon	25
09/24/24 Tue	32
09/25/24 Wed	38
09/26/24 Thu	51
09/27/24 Fri	102
09/28/24 Sat	130

Week 5	
Psalms Praising God's Glory	
09/29/24 Sun	67
09/30/24 Mon	76
10/01/24 Tue	93
10/02/24 Wed	104
10/03/24 Thu	139
10/04/24 Fri	119:1-88
10/05/24 Sat	119:89-175
Week 6	
Communal Lament Psalms	
10/06/24 Sun	44
10/07/24 Mon	60
10/08/24 Tue	74
10/09/24 Wed	79
10/10/24 Thu	80
10/11/24 Fri	83
10/12/24 Sat	85
Week 7	
Psalms Praising the Goodness of God	
10/13/24 Sun	4
10/14/24 Mon	9
10/15/24 Tue	18
10/16/24 Wed	32
10/17/24 Thu	36
10/18/24 Fri	65
10/19/24 Sat	84
Week 8	
Individual Lament Psalms	
10/20/24 Sun	
10/21/24 Mon	43
10/22/24 Tue	54
10/23/24 Wed	64
10/24/24 Thu	69
10/25/24 Fri	70
10/26/24 Sat	86
Week 9	
Psalms of Trust and Assurance	
10/27/24 Sun	57
10/28/24 Mon	61
10/29/24 Tue	63
10/30/24 Wed	71
10/31/24 Thu	108
11/01/24 Fri	115
11/02/24 Sat	131

Week 10	
Psalms of Nature and Creation	
11/03/24 Sun	8
11/04/24 Mon	19
11/05/24 Tue	29
11/06/24 Wed	33
11/07/24 Thu	65
11/08/24 Fri	104
11/09/24 Sat	148
Week 11	
Individual Lament Psalms	
11/10/24 Sun	
11/11/24 Mon	88
11/12/24 Tue	102
11/13/24 Wed	120
11/14/24 Thu	140
11/15/24 Fri	142
11/16/24 Sat	143
Week 12	
Imprecatory Psalms	
11/17/24 Sun	35
11/18/24 Mon	40
11/19/24 Tue	58
11/20/24 Wed	59
11/21/24 Thu	69
11/22/24 Fri	109
11/23/24 Sat	140
Week 13	
Thanksgiving Psalms: God's Goodness	
11/24/24 Sun	46
11/25/24 Mon	48
11/26/24 Tue	68
11/27/24 Wed	91
11/28/24 Thu	99
11/29/24 Fri	113
11/30/24 Sat	146

Lesson 1 – What is Prayer?

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. For the quarter, what do you need to improve most when it comes to your prayers?
Greater frequency? Making it a part of your thoughts throughout the day? Sincerity?
More focused and less distracted? Finding quiet times for prayer and meditation?
Managing expectations from your prayers?
2. How would you define prayer?
3. There seems to be a universal tendency to pray even among people are not religious.
Why do such people pray? Why do Christians pray?
4. What are the various types of prayer?

Notes/Questions:

Lesson 2 – Learning to Pray

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. Lu 11:1 – “Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”” Why did they ask Jesus this? Didn’t they know how to pray?
2. When did you first learn to pray? How were you taught? What about someone who did not grow up in a Christian home ... how do they learn to pray?
3. Luke 11:2-4 – Some refer to this as the “Lord’s Prayer.” Why might that not be a good title for it?
4. What are the key points from Jesus’ teaching?

Notes/Questions:

Lesson 3 – The Constancy of Prayer

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. Consider some of the passages where we see Jesus praying:
 - Mt. 14:23; 26:36-44; Mk. 1:35; 6:46; 14:32-41; Lk. 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 9:28-29; 10:21; 11:1; 22:32; 22:39-46; 23:34,46; Jn. 11:41-42; 12:27-28; Jn. 17
 - When do we see Him pray? Under what circumstances? Where is He? Is He by Himself or with others?

2. Read through prayer examples in the book of Acts:
 - Acts 1:14,24; 2:42; 3:1; 4:31; 6:2-6; 8:14-15; 8:22-24; 9:11; 9:40; 10:1-2,9,30-31; 11:5; 12:5,12; 13:3; 14:23; 16:13,16,25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17-21; 27:29; 28:8
 - What are some of the circumstances you see here? What do we see them praying for?

3. Jesus and Paul both gave admonitions to 'pray always' or 'pray without ceasing' (Lk. 18:1; 21:36; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 1 Thes. 5:17). What does this mean?

4. What's the difference between 'saying prayers' and 'praying'?

Notes/Questions:

Lesson 4 – Praying for Others

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. What are intercessions? What kind of intercessions were typically made in the Old Testament? How about in the New Testament?
2. For whom should we pray? (reference 1 Tim. 2:1-2; Mt. 5:44-45; Lk. 6:28; Col. 4:2-4; Mt. 9:38; Eph. 6:18-20; 1 Jn. 5:16) What are some things we should pray for on their behalf?
3. In praying for others, how does prayer change me and my relationship with them?
4. Is there someone you find difficult to forgive? A long-harbored grudge perhaps? Consider Lk. 23:34 and Acts 7:60. How can such prayers help us with this?
5. Gale Sayers, a Hall of Fame NFL football player wrote a book titled, "I am third." What did he mean by that? How does this idea impact your prayers?

Notes/Questions:

Lesson 5 – Prayer in Time of Trouble

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. Generally speaking, what are troubles the result of? (cf. Gen. 3:1-19)
2. Read Job 14:1-2; 5:7; Eccl. 2:20-23. How do we avoid complete despair as we consider these things?
3. We have many examples of prayer in the face of trouble: David – Ps. 142, 51; Hannah – 1 Sam. 1:9-18; Jonah – Jonah 2:1-9; Hezekiah – Isa. 37:14-20; Daniel – Dan. 6:10-11; Saul – Acts 9:8-12; Peter – Acts 12:5,12. Reflect on the kinds of trouble each of these individuals faced and how each situation is unique. What do these individuals have in common?
4. The readings from the Psalms for week 4 are Psalms of Penitence. How do these psalmists describe the effects of their ‘troubles’ or sin and what do they plead for?

Notes/Questions:

Lesson 6 – When God Says 'No' or 'Wait'

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. Sometimes people will complain that God did not respond to their prayer and question whether there really is a God. What might you say to such a person?
2. What are some reasons God might not hear or regard someone's prayer? Consider these passages: Isa. 59:1-2; Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:9; Lk. 18:9-14; Mk. 11:25-26; Jms. 1:5-8; Jms. 4:3; 1 Pet. 3:7.
3. Consider these examples and think about why God might say 'no' to some of our prayers: 2 Cor. 12:1-10; Num. 20:10-12 / Deut. 3:23-27 / Mt. 17:1-3.
4. Sometimes we must wait for an answer to a prayer. How might this be best for us or the situation? Look at the following references: Job 19:7; 30:20; 42:1-6,10ff; Mt. 15:21-28; Mk. 5:22-43; Jn. 11:1-45; Rev. 6:9-10; 20:1-6.

Notes/Questions:

Lesson 7 – What Do We Expect When We Pray

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. What do you expect when you pray?
2. What does God expect of us when we pray?
3. A number of years ago, the prayer of Jabez (1 Chron. 4:9-10) became the focus of a lot of attention in the religious world. Books were written on it and there was quite a 'following' that promoted the prayer. What was wrong with that focus? What can we actually learn from the prayer?
4. What does Jesus mean in Luke 18:1 where He says they ought "not lose heart." What's the antidote to this? Luke 18:2-8; Luke 11:5-13; 1 Thes. 5:17

Notes/Questions:

Lesson 8 – Providence - God is Able

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. How would you define 'providence'? What is the difference between providence and miracles?
2. God had a plan or a purpose for man even before the creation. What was God's purpose for mankind? (Eph. 1:1-14; 1 Peter 1:17-21)
3. Consider some of the Hebrew and Greek names for God: El, Elohim, El Shaddai, Yahweh-Jireh, Yahweh-Rapha, El Roi, Pantokrator. What do these names tell us about God's ability to answer prayer?
4. When you further consider the idea that 'God is able,' what do the following passages tell us? Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 7:25-28; Mark 10:23-25; Eph. 3:20-21; Phil. 4:13

My Notes:

Lesson 9 – Providence and the Problem of Evil

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. God created everything and called it “very good” (Gen. 1:31). If that is the case, how do we explain the origin of Satan? (consider Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Mt. 25:41)
2. What types of evils has Satan been responsible for in the past? (reference: Job 1:12-19; 2:5-7; 17:6; 19:13-22; Lk. 13:10-17)
3. The word ‘evil’ has a more general meaning than we sometimes think about. How would you define it especially in light of such passages as Deut. 30:15, Amos 3:6 (KJV), and Isa. 45:7 (KJV)? Since God is good (Mk. 10:18; Jms. 1:17), how do we understand these passages?
4. In the moral realm, evil is the consequence of sin, wickedness and rebellion against God. Note Rom. 1:18-32 and the ultimate result of sin and its evil fruits. How can man avoid this consequence? (Isa. 1:16; Ezek. 33:11; Rom. 12:9; 1 Pet. 3:9-12)

Notes/Questions:

Lesson 10 – God is in Control

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. As the Creator of all things, does not God then have the right and ability to control all things? (see Psa. 33:6; 148:5,6; 93:1-2; 103:19-22; Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-17; Rev. 4:11)
2. Read Psa. 104. Note all the ways in which God controls His creation.
3. Read Job 38:1-38. What are some examples of God's control over the inanimate world?
4. Read Job 38:39 – 42:6. What are some examples of God's control over the animate world? Also, read Mt. 6:25-34.

Notes/Questions:

Lesson 11 - Providence and the Nations

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. As we consider the providence of God and the Hebrew nation, the account of Joseph is an exceptional example of His providence at work. Note some of the non-miraculous, providential events through the life of Joseph.

2. As the Old Testament progresses, God's providence continues to move His purpose along in the fulfillment of promises and prophecy. Another account we find with notable providential events is the story of Esther. Note some of these events from the book of Esther.

3. As the history of Israel plays out in the Old Testament, we see God using a number of heathen nations to fulfill His purposes. From the passages listed here, note some of these nations and how they were used in relation to Israel: Ex. 3-12; Deut. 28:49-50; Isa. 10:5-7,24-26; Hab. 1:5-11; Jer. 50:17-18; Isa. 13:1,17-20; Isa. 44:28-45:7; Dan. 8.

My Notes:

Lesson 12 - Providence and the Individual

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. The book of Ecclesiastes sets forth the vanity of life when viewed from a purely earthly standpoint. However, the name of God appears 40 times and provides an alternate viewpoint. Note the following passages and how they speak to God's provisions for man: Eccl. 2:24-26; 3:1-17; 4:6; 5:1-7; 5:18-20; 6:12; 7:13-14; 8:15-9:1; 9:7-10; 11:5; 12:13-14. Also, note Prov. 3:5-6.

2. Read Matthew 6:25-34. What does the word 'anxious' or 'worry' mean? (vv. 25,27,31,34). How much provision in your life does worry produce? What is the real answer for that provision? Note the Lord's illustrations that drive this point home. Also, note that the same word is found in Lk. 10:38-42 (v. 41); what is the 'good part' (v. 42)?

3. Paul's journey to Rome is another example of God's providence at work in an individual. Think about this final journey as well as what led up to it. Note some of the events that would seem to be providential. Acts 21-28

4. Consider James 5:13-18 as it relates to our discussion of providence.

Notes/Questions:

