



*Prayer
&
Providence*

Lesson 1 – What is Prayer?

Lesson Plan

Lesson #	Date	Lesson Title
1	3/10/21	What is Prayer?
2	3/17/21	Learning to Pray
3	3/24/21	The Constancy of Prayer
4	3/31/21	Praying for Others
5	4/7/21	Prayer in Time of Trouble
6	4/14/21	When God Says 'No' or 'Wait'
---	4/21/21	(Gospel Meeting)
7	4/28/21	What do I Expect When I Pray?
8	5/5/21	Providence - God is Able
9	5/12/21	Providence and the Problem of Evil
10	5/19/21	God is in Control
11	5/26/21	Providence and the Nations
12	6/2/21	Providence and the Individual



Learning to Pray from the Psalms

- Daily reading – one psalm each day
- Each week follows a particular category or theme of psalms
- Those selected are mostly prayers (i.e. 1st person expressions to God) or parts of each psalm
- Read the psalm and try to turn it into your prayer
- Fit it to your circumstances and concerns
- Direct your thoughts to God using the words of the psalmist with appropriate modifications



Thought Questions and Notes

- A lesson sheet for each class
- A few passages and thought questions
- Please read those ahead of time and write down your thoughts and any other questions you may have

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?





Man is Incurably Religious

- Born with an innate disposition to worship someone or something
- Think for a minute how many people react in certain situations
- A universal tendency to pray
 - **Remote tribes**
 - **Incas and Aztecs**
 - **Muslims – 5 times / day**
 - **Atheists?**



“We pray because we want to thank someone or something for the beauties and glories of life, and also because we feel small and helpless and sometimes afraid. We pray for forgiveness, for strength, for contact with the One who is, for assurance that we are not alone. Millions in AA groups pray daily to a Higher Power, begging for help in controlling their addictions. We pray because we can’t help it.”

Philip Yancey

“prayer” – from Latin root ‘precari’ – to ask, entreat;
a linguistic cousin to ‘precarious’

Prayer in the US (Pew Research, 2014)

Frequency of prayer

% of adults who pray...

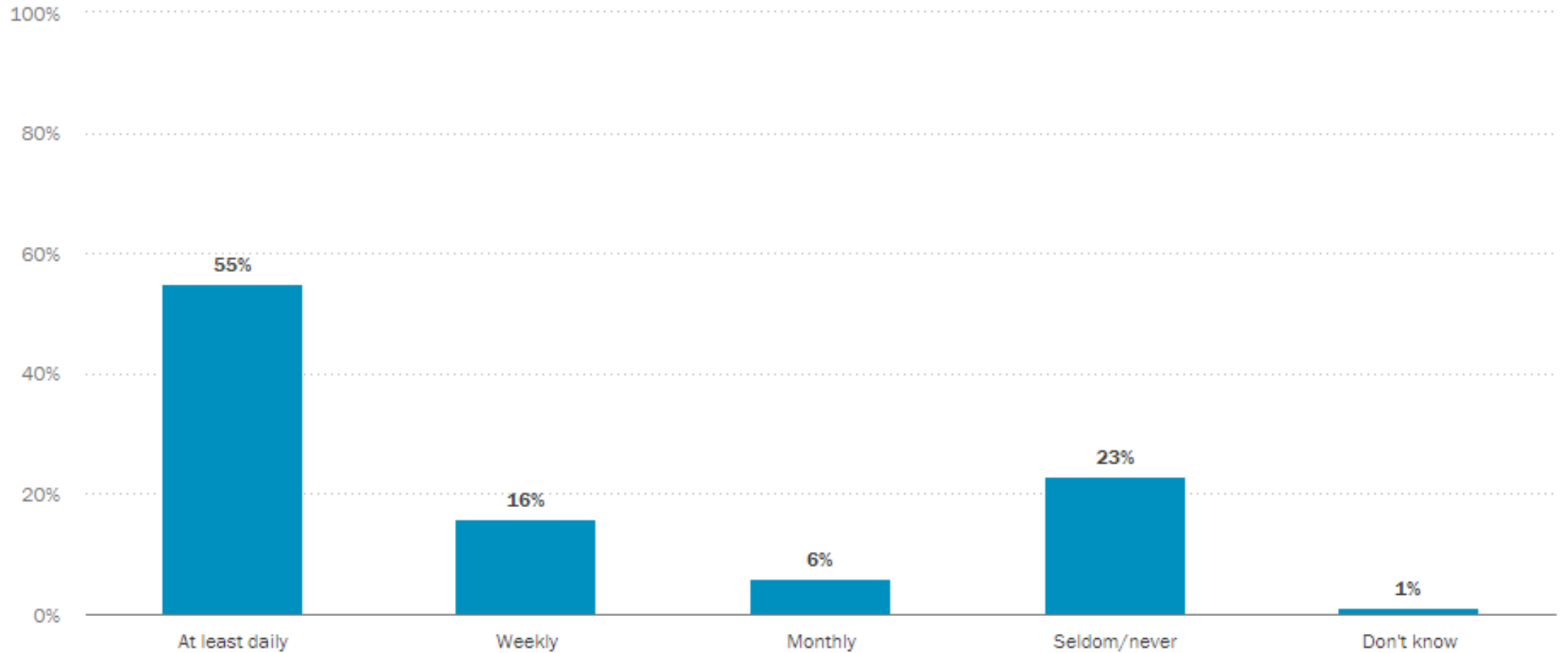
Chart

Trends

Table

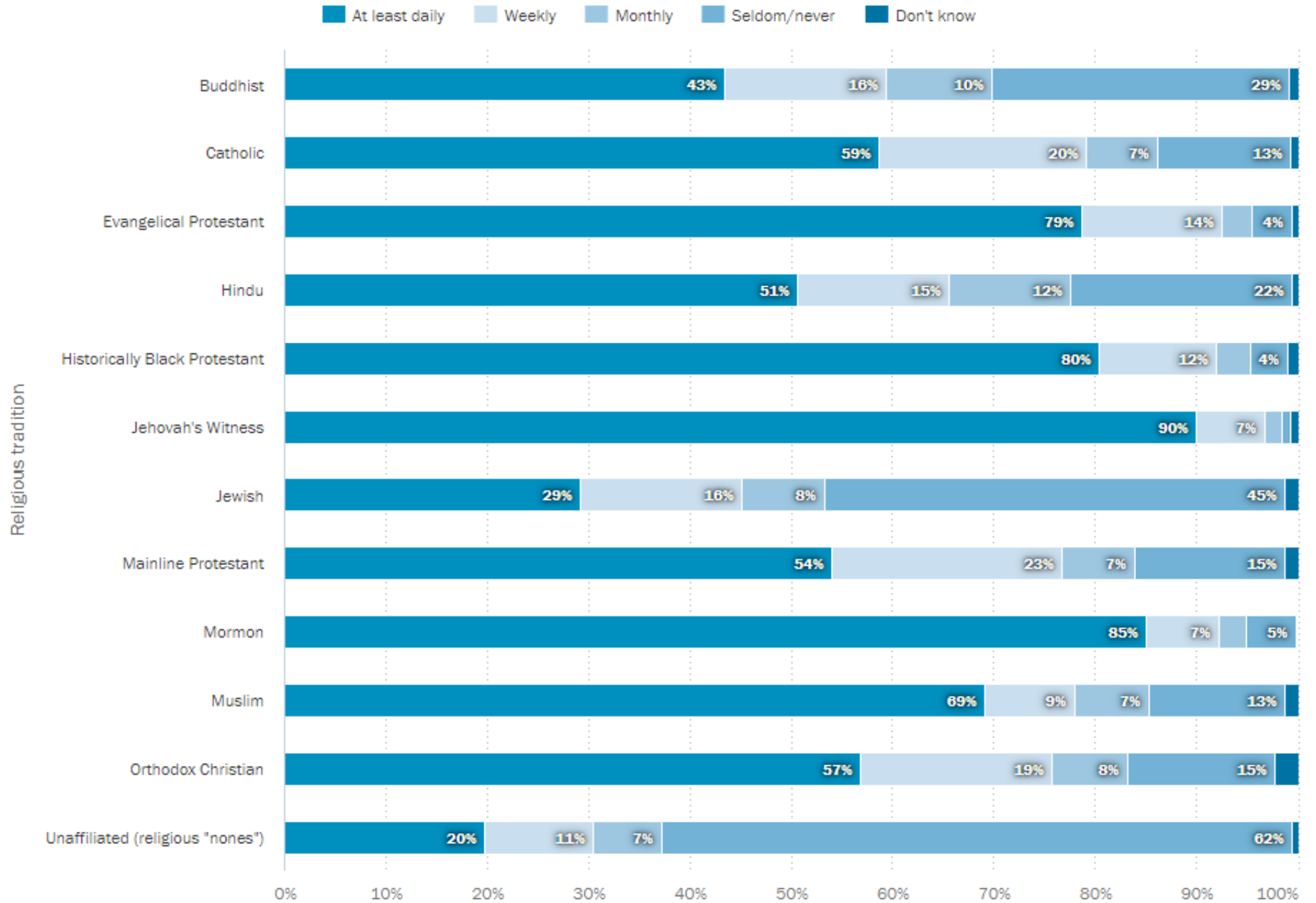
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Sample size = 35,071. Visit [this table](#) to see approximate margins of error for a group of a given size. For full question wording, see the [survey questionnaire](#).

Frequency of Prayer by Religious Group





“To the believer, prayer is a sacred privilege as well as an obligation. When he prays solemn thoughts should fill his soul; for the finite creature is before the infinite creator, ruler, and sustainer of the universe. He is before the Lord of heaven and earth, communing and talking with Him, seeking His fellowship, and casting his anxieties upon Him, believing that He cares for him. It is indeed a blessed favor bestowed upon us when the eternal God invites us to share a joyous fellowship and communion with Him; this is the glory of prayer.”

Homer Hailey



Main Points for Our Lesson

1. Four key presuppositions about prayer
2. What is prayer?
3. Whose prayer does God hear?
4. The importance of prayer



4 Key Presuppositions About Prayer

1. Man is in need of resources far beyond his ability to supply
 - **1 Ki. 3:7-10; Jer. 10:23**
2. The One to whom man would pray is personal
 - **1 Pet. 5:6-7; Psa. 113:4-6**
3. Man is weak, and the object of man's prayers must be One who is a tender, compassionate and loving God
 - **Psa. 34:15; 1 Jn. 5:14-15**
4. If God is truly omniscient, man must submit to His divine wisdom in responding to our prayers
 - **Eccl. 6:12**

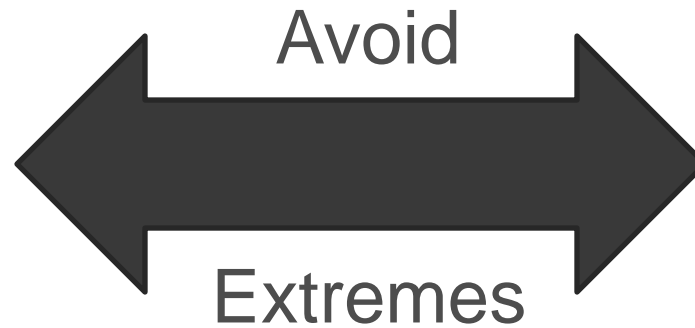


What is Prayer?

- An expression of our heart's desire unto God
 - **Rom. 10:1**
- An affectionate discourse between a child of God and their heavenly Father
- An act of faith
 - **We cannot see God, but we know He is there, and He will act in response to our prayers**
 - **Heb 11:6**
- By praying, we acknowledge our dependence on a Being higher than ourselves
- Prayer is not wishful thinking



God is not
Santa Claus
– just there
to grant
wishes



Nor should we
be fatalistic –
i.e. it doesn't
matter if we
pray



1 Timothy 2:1-2

- Supplication
 - An asking or entreaty that grows out of a need
- Prayers
 - Communion with God – devotion and worship; also, petition for personal needs
- Intercessions
 - To make petition on behalf of others
- Thanksgiving
 - The expression of gratitude and grateful praise to the Lord for His blessings



What is Prayer (cont.)

- Prayer is a spiritual activity. It is not a ceremony or just some rote habit.
 - **Consider Daniel (Dan. 6:10)**
- Prayers do not need to be long to be effective
 - **Consider the publican (Lk. 18:13)**



Whose prayer does God hear?

- A privilege and right of God's children
 - **Mt. 6:9; Jn. 3:3-5; 1 Jn. 3:1**
- He who worships God and does His will
 - **Jn. 9:30-31; Prov. 28:9**
- Those with 'holy hands'; purity of life and motive
 - **1 Tim. 2:8; Ps. 24:3-4; Isa. 1:15**
- The privilege of one who is righteous
 - **Jms. 5:16; 1 Pet. 3:12**
- Those who keep His commandments
 - **1 Jn. 3:22; 2:3**



Whose prayer does God hear?

- Exception
 - **The saved man who sins against God**
 - Simon – Acts 8:9-13,22
 - **God knows we will not be perfect in obedience**
 - Eccl. 7:20; Jms. 3:2; 1 Jn. 1:8
 - **But God is merciful, and He will hear our pleas for forgiveness**
 - 1 Jn. 1:9; Ex. 34:6-7; Ezek. 33:11; 18:21-24; Lk. 15:11-32
- What about Cornelius?
 - **Acts 10:1-2**



Importance of Prayer

- Prayer should have first priority in the Christian's life – we must make it a vital part of our every day
 - **Mt 7:7 "Ask ... seek ... knock" >>> intensity**
- “Continuing steadfastly in prayer” (Rom. 12:12)
 - **Acts 2:42; 1 Thes. 5:17**
- Jesus illustrated the importance and constancy
- Finally, when you think about our needs, our challenges, our failures ... why would we not want to pray to our compassionate Father?



Next Week – Lesson 2 – Learning to Pray

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?

+ Daily Readings from the Psalms