

S T U D Y G U I D E



Prayer

by R.C. Sproul



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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

Renew your Mind.

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How to Pray

INTRODUCTION

Some have reduced prayer to merely talking to God. But there is more involved than a conversation between two parties. Before we pray, there are a couple of things we need to remember. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul helps us understand critical yet simple elements we need to incorporate into our prayers.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To consider why people often struggle with consistent prayer lives
2. To recognize that prayer is a sacred duty and effective when it is fervent and expectant of being answered
3. To show that we are called and commanded to be constant in prayer as modeled and taught by Jesus

SCRIPTURE READING

Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?" After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah rose. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. And she vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."

—1 Samuel 1:7–11

LECTURE OUTLINE

A. The Christian approach to prayer

1. Many people struggle with the matter of prayer.
2. People carry guilt because they feel that they have not been proficient and consistent in their prayer lives.

B. Praying like the biblical saints

1. Scripture reveals that the saints of old were characterized by consistent lives of prayer.
2. First Samuel 1 tells of Hannah and how the Lord God had closed her womb, which caused her great sorrow and misery.
3. Hannah prayed to the Lord and wept in great anguish because she wanted to be a mother.
4. One of the keys to effective praying is that prayers are fervent, not casual, and expectant of being answered.
5. When people like Jacob entered into conversations with God, they wrestled, stayed at it all night, and were persistent out of the depths of their heart.
6. Hannah prayed a silent prayer from the depths of her soul that resulted in her singing a song of celebration in response to God for answering her prayer.

C. Prayer as a sacred duty

1. James the brother of Jesus was known as “Old Camel Knees” from having calluses on his knees from spending so much time in prayer.
2. Not everyone is called to the ministry of prayer with the same intensity and persistence, but we all have a capacity for growth in our prayer life.
3. Prayer should not be viewed as a burdensome obligation that causes guilt trips.
4. We are called and commanded by Christ and the Apostles to be constant in prayer.

D. Prayer as an opportunity

1. It is sweet to come into the actual presence of God Himself and to speak to Him from the deepest level of our concerns from our hearts.
2. We should not consider ourselves failures simply because we have not been successful in achieving a consistent prayer life.
3. Prayerlessness is not the result of having no desire to fellowship or commune with God, nor is it because we have little time or lack discipline.
4. The reason that most people fall short and do not enjoy prayer is because they do not know how to pray.

E. Jesus’ example of prayer

1. The disciples asked Jesus how to pray because they often observed Him praying.
2. Jesus did not pray like the pious Pharisees but instead went away by Himself and quietly, intimately poured out His soul to the Father.

3. Jesus spent entire nights praying for spiritual power that was from and aligned with His Father's will.

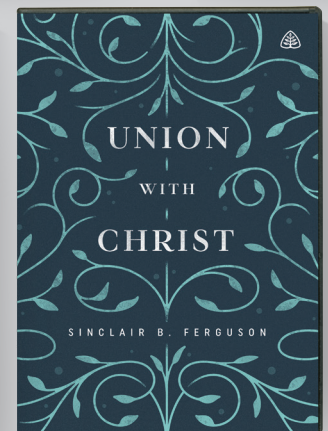
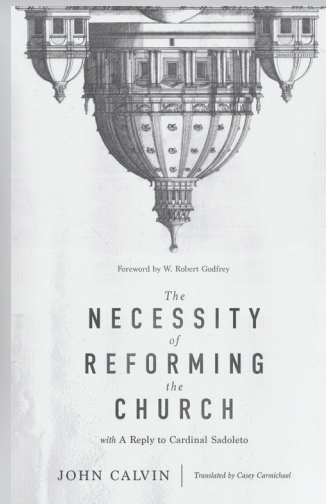
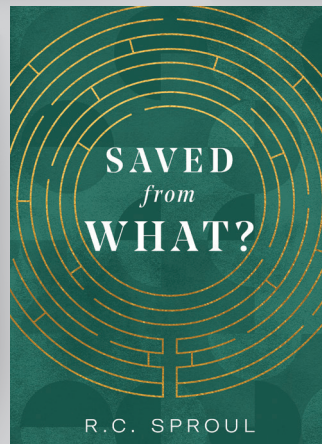
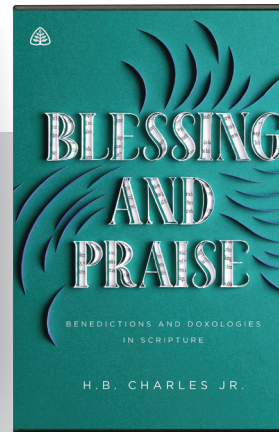
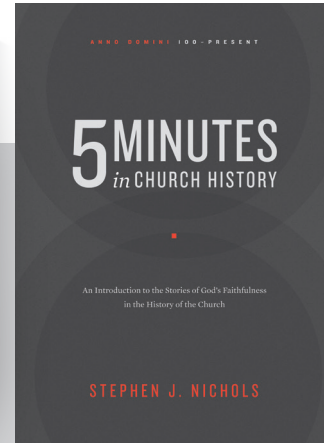
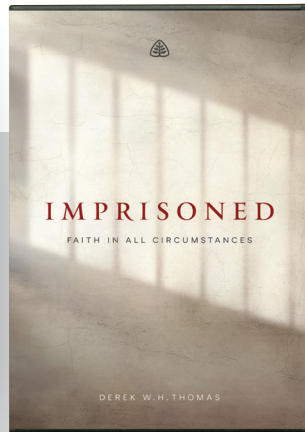
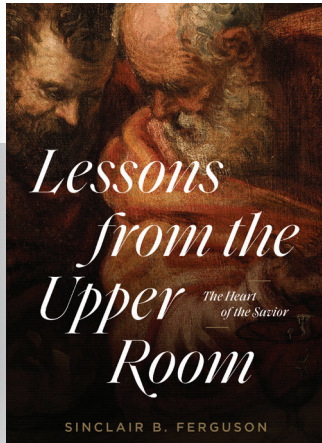
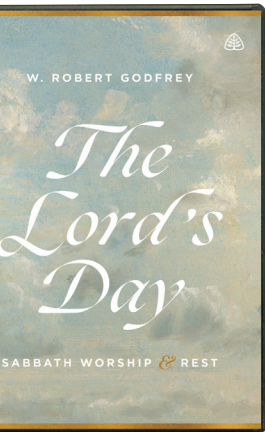
STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The saints in the Bible often struggled with inconsistent prayer lives.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Why did Hannah pray to the Lord and weep in great anguish?
 - a. Eli the priest thought she was undeserving.
 - b. God did not hear her silent prayers.
 - c. Her husband, Elkanah, was unsupportive.
 - d. She wanted to be a mother.
3. Prayer should not be viewed as a burdensome obligation that causes guilt trips but instead as which of the following?
 - a. A ministry
 - b. A measurement of spiritual growth
 - c. A sacred duty
 - d. The sole means of communicating with God
4. Which of the following is a mark of strong and effective prayers?
 - a. Boldness
 - b. Casualness
 - c. Fervency
 - d. Presumption
5. Which of the following reasons best explains why most people do not enjoy prayer?
 - a. Lack of personal discipline
 - b. Little desire to commune with God
 - c. Not enough time
 - d. No knowledge of how to pray
6. Why did the disciples ask Jesus how to pray?
 - a. They had often observed Him praying.
 - b. They had requests for God to hear.
 - c. They wanted to do miracles.
 - d. They were seeking forgiveness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What reasons would you use in explaining to someone that prayer is an important part of the Christian life?
2. Does God hear and answer all prayers from all people equally? Why or why not?
3. What are some reasons that your prayer life is not as robust and satisfying as it could be? What would you change about your current prayer life?
4. How might you respond to the challenge that prayer is unnecessary because God already knows what you want to say? How are Jesus' recorded prayers and teachings on prayer part of the answer?

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