



New Testament Prayers For The Church

East Taieri Presbyterian Church

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There are many prayers in the New Testament and there is value for us in studying them. In particular, in these studies, we will not consider the need for prayer or how to pray. Our focus is: What did they pray about?

What are the prayer concerns and priorities of the apostles?

What sort of church were they wanting to see?

What might happen if we consistently prayed these prayers for our own church?

If these prayers were answered, what would the church/individuals look like?

What is their significance for our own growth?

It is strongly recommended that you go through the studies by yourself before you meet as a group. Pray and study asking God to reveal wonderful things to you.

Then, when you do meet, you will be able to share the insights God has given people rather than just start your thinking.

Each study follows the following sequence:

- Observe
 - This is just about noticing the facts. Look carefully at what the Bible actually says. We are not yet interpreting it – just noticing it.
 - This is the “What?” question.
- Understand
 - What is the meaning and significance of what you have observed?
 - This is the “So what?” question.
- Apply
 - We are to be “doers of the word” (James 1:22). How will you put this teaching into action?
 - This is the “What now?” question.

There are resources on prayer at <https://sites.google.com/view/christianspirituality/spiritual-practices/prayer>.

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4. In verses 17-19, Paul mentions two things that he keeps asking God for on behalf of the Ephesians but each of them contains a “so that”. Fill in the following.

Requests 1: _____ (v.17)

Why? _____ (v.17)

Request 2: _____ (v.18)

Why? So that you may know...

_____ (v.18)

_____ (v.18)

_____ (v.19)

Understand

5. Why would each of the following be so important to Paul that he never stopped giving thanks for them?

a. The Ephesians had been saved.

b. The Ephesians had received the Holy Spirit.

c. The Ephesians were people of faith.

d. The Ephesians were people of love.

6. The two main prayer requests in vv.17, 18 (Request 1 and Request 2 above) are similar. How would you summarise what they say?

7. Why, do you think, that was a prayer priority for Paul?

8. Look up some of these passages. What is the theme that runs through them?

- Ephesians 3:17b-19
- Colossians 1:9
- 2 Kings 6:13-17 (esp. 17)
- Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22
- Psalm 119:18
- Luke 24:31 (c.f. v.16)
- Matthew 13:13-18
- John 9:25 (see also vv.39-41)
- 2 Corinthians 4:4

9. Is a prayer for enlightenment/revelation/understanding important primarily for Christians or non-Christians? Why?

10. Consider the four “so that”s. What do you understand by each of these and what difference does it make in everyday life?

a. So that you may know God better

Meaning

Difference

b. So that you may know the hope to which He has called you

Meaning

Difference

c. So that you may know the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints.

Meaning

Difference

d. So that you may know His incomparably great power for us

Meaning

Difference

11. It has been said that the New Testament writers prayed really big prayers – spiritually ambitious prayer. Given what you have seen in Ephesians 1:15-23, what do you think is meant by “spiritually ambitious prayers”?

Over the course of these studies, you will be able to compile a list of priority prayer topics as seen in the various New Testament prayers. Feel free to use the wording you came up with but we can now start that list. In this study we have seen Paul’s focus on:

1. Salvation
2. Being filled with the Holy Spirit
3. Faith
4. Love
5. Spiritual insight, revelation, enlightenment
6. Knowing God better
7. Knowing our hope
8. Knowing our inheritance
9. Knowing the power of God

12. If we pray similarly “spiritually ambitious prayers” for our families, friends, church, etc., what might we see happen?

Apply

13. Keep that list with you as you pray for your family, friends, church etc. and pray for those things.

14. Spend some time praying now and focus particularly on some of those topics.

Study 2- Praying For Leaders In The Church

Introductory Question

1. If you were (or, are) a leader in your church, what would be the biggest leadership struggle?

Observe

See what the Bible actually says.

In this study we will not look at only one prayer. There is no New Testament prayer specifically for church leaders. Instead, we will seek to gain insight from a number of related passages.

2. Fill in the following table, simply noting a) what the passage says about the role of leaders, and b) what prayer requests, or topics, are mentioned. Not all of the passages will say something about each question. You might not even think the passage is relevant!

	The role of the leader	Prayer request or topic
Acts 12:5		
Acts 20:28-38		
1 Timothy 2:1-4		
1 Thessalonians 5:12-13		
Hebrews 13:17-19		
2 Thessalonians 3:1-2		
Colossians 4:2-4		
Ephesians 6:18-20		

Romans 15:30-32		
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Understand

What is the significance of what you have seen?

- 3. There are many different leadership roles but try to summarise what the passages say about the role of a leader in the church?**
- 4. If no one was praying for those leaders, what aspects of that role would be impossible?**
- 5. What prayer topics are found in more than one passage above? Are those ones particularly important? Why do you say that?**
- 6. What important prayer topics for leaders have not be mentioned in those passages?**
- 7. What three prayer topics do you think are most crucial for the leaders in your church?**

Why did you choose those ones?

8. If God answered those three prayers, what would change in your church?

Apply

9. Write down the names of the key leaders in your church/organisation.

10. Write another list of other leaders in your church that you know of.

11. Pray for them, remembering to prioritise the three prayer priorities identified in question 7.

12. Do you believe God is asking you to regularly prayer for the leaders in your church (and maybe other churches)? If so, make a commitment to pray for them frequently.

Study 3- Praying For Holiness

Introductory Question

1. **If you were to describe a holy person, what would you look for in them – what would your expectations be?**

Observe

2. **What does the New Testament scripture have to say? Discuss or record what you see/hear in the following verses.**

Romans 6:22

Romans 12:1

2 Corinthians 7:1

Philippians 2:5

Hebrews 12:14

And from the Old Testament, check out Psalm 139:23-24

Understand

3. What is holiness, or to be holy? Leviticus 20:7

(Different versions will use different words what do you think the words consecrate and sanctification mean?)

4. Can seeking perfect behaviour make us holy? Why, or why not? (1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:23)

5. What might Jesus have been thinking when he asked God to make his followers “*holy by your truth*”? (John 17:17)

6. What do you think of from reading Philippians 1:9-10? (also 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13)

What really matters?

What is the result?

7. Discuss the fruit of the Spirit as a possible expression of what holiness might look like in the life and actions of the church? What might change around our attitudes and behaviour towards one another?

8. Other verses to consider for discussion (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, Hebrews 13:20-21)

Apply

9. Consider one area that you can pray into regarding holiness for yourself that would impact the lives of those around you? (Don't be afraid to be honest with yourself – there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus)

10. Consider an area to pray into for the church (the body of believers) that would help us to bring honour to Jesus and fruitfulness in our witness.

11. We do not agree on everything. Thinking about the fruit of the Spirit, pray about how our response to diversity and different opinions might look as a people together in holiness.

A parting prayer from Paul (Acts 20:32)

And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.

Study 4 – A Disciple-making Prayer

Introductory Question

1. What is an ambitious dream you have? What needs to happen for it to be accomplished?

Observe

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 1. Make a list of the things that have happened in the lives of the Thessalonian Christians.

3. Consider the prayer in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24. What is Paul's vision for the Thessalonians?

4. What is his vision for his converts as described in Colossians 1:28-29?

5. Our primary focus in this study is the prayer in 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13. At this stage, simply list the various prayer topics in each verse.

v.9

v.10

v.11

v.12

v.13

Understand

6. Describe what you think these phrases mean. What would this look like?

“sanctified through and through” (or however it is expressed in your translation), 5:23.

“your whole spirit, soul and body kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”, 5:23.

“Present everyone fully mature in Christ”, Colossians 1:28.

7. Look again at 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13. V.9 looks back to all of the good things mentioned in chapter 1. Verse 13 look forward to what they will hopefully be like when Jesus returns. But verses 10-12 (and, actually, 13) are what needs to happen now. What does Paul pray for?

8. Given their conversion and progress, why does Paul refer to “what is lacking in your faith”?

9. 1 Thessalonians 5:24 says, “The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it”. If God is going to sanctify them, why does Paul say “To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me”?

10. 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23 and Colossians 1:28 all refer to Jesus’ return and us standing in the presence of God. Why do you believe that was so important for Paul?

Apply

11. How do you feel you are going in relation to each of the following?

- a. Having a vision for the people in your circles to be blameless and holy when they stand before God?
- b. Looking for opportunities to build people up in their faith?
- c. Praying for deep, Holy Spirit transformation in people's lives?

12. What are some practical ways you will "supply what is lacking" in the faith of people around you?

13. If you are comfortable with it, pray this prayer, or your own prayer based on 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13.

Lord, I am enormously grateful for the people around me and for the wonderful things you have done in their lives. Please give me opportunities to encourage them and build them up in their faith. Lord, may our love for each other, and for everyone, increase and overflow. May our hearts be strengthened so that we are blameless and holy in Your presence when Jesus returns. Give me a vision for that. Please, help me to both be a model for others, and willing and able to build them up.



Study 5 – Praying For Holy Spirit Power

Introductory Question

1. In what ways could you say that you have experienced the Holy Spirit?

Observe

Acts 8:14-17 and 19:1-7

Read Acts 8:14-17 and 19:1-7

2. What seems to be the emphasis in these passages?

Ephesians 3:14-21

Read Ephesians 3:14-21

3. This might vary a little depending on the translation but try to fill in these gaps.

I pray that _____ (v.16)

so that _____ (v.17)

And I pray that _____

_____ (vv.17-19)

So that _____ (v.19)

4. What does Paul say at the beginning (vv.14-16) and end (vv.20-21) of this prayer about God's ability, and willingness, to answer it?

Colossians 1:9-14

Read Colossians 1:9-14

5. Fill in these gaps.

The one request: _____
_____ (v.9)

The one desired result: so that _____ (v.10)

The four aspects of that result: _____ (v.10)

_____ (v.10)

_____ (v.11)

_____ (v.12)

Understand

6. Why, do you think, the apostles emphasised receiving the Holy Spirit?

7. Who do you understand the Holy Spirit to be?

8. If Paul visited a church, how would he be able to tell if the Holy Spirit was present or absent?
What would be the signs?

Read 1 Corinthians 4:19-20. Do you think that “power” is a key indicator of the presence of the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?

What would “power” look like? What would Paul be looking for?

9. What persuaded the enquirer in 1 Corinthians 14:24-25 that “God is really among you”?

10. How do you respond to the suggestion that “power” includes both a) the power of God working in us, changing us, and b) the power of God working through us, changing others?

11. List some examples of how the power of God works in us.

12. List some examples of how the power of God works through us.

13. In Ephesians 3:14-21, was Paul praying for a work of the Spirit in the Ephesians or through the Ephesians? What is the basis for your answer?

14. In Colossians 1:9-14, was Paul praying for a work of the Spirit in the Colossians or through the Colossians? What is the evidence?

15. From what you have seen, and what you already knew, make a list of the things you long to see more of in your church but which only the Holy Spirit can do?

Apply

16. Are there individuals you might pray for that they might receive the Holy Spirit? Are there people in your group who would like that prayer now? Or other people you know who want a greater experience of God?

17. Use the list from Question 15 as a prompt for your prayers both now and regularly.



Understand

5. How do you feel about talk of an unseen spiritual realm? Have you any experience of this as a reality? Share testimonies if possible to encourage each other (keep it positive)

6. When do you think the church gained victory over death and destruction? Why?

7. Why would Satan attack individuals if he is after the fall of the church?

8. Why might the fall of the church be so important to Satan? (hint: Eph 3:10)

Apply

9. Pray for God's protection of his church (body) from the challenges of the dark powers and authorities in the heavenly realm.
10. Seek God's guidance about how you might act together as a body of believers and not just as individuals (discuss).
11. Encourage one another to read the bible and to look for God's promises for believers and his church.

Study 7 – Praying For Relationships And Unity

The disciple and apostle John taught that our love for God is tested in the waters of our love (and relationship) with one another. In other words, how we conduct ourselves with each other as the church, reflects the level of love we have for God – and therefore stands as our witness of God’s love for the world. So, to the world, good conduct in our relationships reflects a good God, and poor conduct reflects a poor image of God.

Introductory Questions

Read and consider Philippians 1:27

1. **How did Paul see the relationship between our conduct towards each other and being seen to be of one Spirit (or mind)?**

Read Luke 22:42

2. **The oneness between God the Father and Jesus the Son could perhaps be described as “perfect”. If it is, were the Father and Son in total agreement?**

What does a “no” answer reveal about the person of Jesus? Does it mean that Father and Son were no longer in a perfect relationship?

In what way might the answer be “yes”?

Observe

3. What does scripture say about how agreement works in the oneness of Father/Son relationship?

Mark 14:36

Matthew 26:42

John 6:38

1 Corinthians 15:28

Philippians 2:6-8

What is the over-arching thing you have seen or learned across these scriptures?

Understand

Now read Philippians 2:5

4. What is Jesus' mindset?

What does this mean as we approach our relationship with God?

Study 8 – Lives Worthy Of Jesus

Introductory Question

1. Imagine you simply observed the life of a Christian. What behaviours would you expect to see?

If you didn't, what would you conclude?

Observe

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3.

2. What does Paul give thanks for?

3. What does James 2:14-26 say about the connection between faith and works?

Read Colossians 1:9-14.

4. Look back on Study 5 and fill in these gaps again, to outline the structure of this passage.

The one request: _____
_____ (v.9)

The one desired result: so that _____
_____ (v.10)

The four aspects of that result: _____ (v.10)
_____ (v.10)
_____ (v.11)
_____ (v.12)

Understand

5. Thinking about 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, are there logical connections between faith and works, love and labour, and hope and endurance? What are they?

6. These passages are different but in what ways do they illustrate the same principle?

Matthew 3:7-8

1 John 3:18

Hebrews 6:11-12

Thinking about Colossians 1:9-14...

7. What is your response to “live a life worthy of Jesus and pleasing Him in every way”? What would be required?

8. Did Paul seem to think it was possible?

9. What do you understand by each of the four “aspects” listed in verse 10 to 12?

Bearing fruit in every good work. (See also John 15:1-7, especially v.16)

Growing in the knowledge of God

Being strengthened by God for endurance and patience

Giving joyful thanks to the Father

10. Do you think those 4 “aspects” summarise a life worthy of Jesus and pleasing to Him? Would you write a different list?

11. In the minds of the apostles, how important was the way their disciples lived? Why do you say that?

Apply

12. How can you do the following? If you are in a group, how you can help each other?

Bear fruit in every good work

Grow in your knowledge of God

Be strong so as to endure and have patience

Give joyful thanks to the Father

13. Write a prayer based on either 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 or Colossians 1:9-14 (or both). Keep it somewhere handy and pray it frequently for your family, friends and church. Pray it regularly as a group.

Study 9 – Bringing Glory To God

Who is God?

Historians have discovered that El was worshipped as a high-god in early Canaanite religion. He was father of the other gods and humankind, god of wisdom and the creator-god, although no creation type stories have been discovered in the Ugaritic texts.

Read Genesis 17:1 and Deuteronomy 6:4. In speaking with Abram, God declared that he was El Shaddai – God Almighty. The Hebrew/Jewish assertion and establishment of El, Yahweh God as supreme above any other god, comes from this foundation. Could the word “one” in Deuteronomy 6:4 also suggest an understanding that there is only one true God – with no other above him?

If El Shaddai, Yahweh is the God above all gods, is it not reasonable to assume that he alone deserves the glory?

Introductory Questions

Read Psalms 24:7 and 29:3

1. Sometimes, the more we try to describe something of God, the harder it seems to become. How would you describe God’s glory?

2. In what ways might God’s glory be seen and understood?

Psalm 19:1-4

Psalm 97:1-6

John 1:14

Romans 1:19-20

Hebrews 1:3

Observe

Read and consider Genesis 1:3 and Revelation 21:23-26

3. **Do you think this is a literal light – like the sun – or do we tend to limit our understanding of God to simple human interpretations? What do you think the “light” of God is?**

4. **Now look at Habbakuk 2:14, Romans 3:23, Revelation 1:12-16. What might these things suggest or reveal about God’s glory?**

Understand

5. **Does God call us to glorify himself? Read 1 Chronicles 16:28-29 and discuss.**

6. **What does Matthew 5:16 say about how we can bring glory to God?**

7. **Consider 1 Corinthians 6:20 and discuss. What obligation is the believer under?**

8. **What do you make of Romans 8:30-31? What might it mean for us to be glorified? Look also at 2 Thessalonians 1:12 and perhaps 2 Peter 1:3-4**

God wants us to glorify him, because in doing so we subject our lives to his way and reveal his nature to the world – the very thing that Jesus did (John 17:4). Through this, God calls others to himself and offers release from bondage and rescue from destruction. Glorifying God is so much more than simply believing that he exists, attending church, or offering a few words or songs of praise – it is to place him foremost in all things and to raise no other thing above him. Glorifying God is to acknowledge his absolute sovereignty, majesty, power and splendour over the whole of creation, because he is the King of Glory!

Apply

9. **Can you think of an area of your life where you might apply the bringing of honour and recognition of God (the glory) in a greater way?**

10. **What behaviours or attitudes could you identify and work on that would reflect God's character, or imitate him more positively?**

11. **Have a think about whether your life is more like the first model, or the second model that Gareth presented in his sermon? Which model brings greater glory to God? How might you go about making a change on this?**

Model 1: "YOU" at the centre of everything, with the aspects of your life compartmentalized and where God is contained in only one of those compartments.

Model 2: "GOD" is at the centre and undergirding everything, where all the aspects of your life are subjected to consideration of God's ways.

John 1:12-13 *To all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn – not with a physical birth resulting from human passion, but a spiritual birth that comes from God.*

Study 10 – Enable Your Servants To Speak

Introductory Question

1. What do you think are the biggest hindrances to evangelistic effectiveness?

Observe

Read Acts 4:23-31

2. Summarise the events leading up to this passage in Acts 3 and 4.

3. What two things did the believers pray for?

Understand

4. What might have been the thoughts and feelings of these believers at this time, given what had happened to Jesus and, now, to Peter and John?

5. They faced two realities:

- a. Jesus meant everything to them and they had been commissioned to share the good news.

b. They had been commanded not to speak in Jesus' name.

Write down all the ways you can think of for resolving that tension.

Which one did they choose?

6. What indicates that they were not necessarily naturally bold?

7. What do you think motivated them to pray for boldness?

**8. Look at each of these passages: Acts 9:28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 29:31, 2 Corinthians 3:12.
Why do you think the writers so frequently mentioned their boldness?**

Re-read Acts 4:29-31

9. What was the other thing the believers prayed for (v.30)?

10. What does each of these passages say about the relationship between the words proclaimed and the miracles God did?

a. Mark 16:20

b. Acts 14:3

c. Hebrews 2:1-4

d. Acts 2:22

11. Is it still God's plan to confirm Christians' words by signs and wonders? Give reasons for saying "yes" and reasons for saying "no".

Yes



No

12. Write a description of the life of a church in which people prayed the Acts 4:29-20 prayer regularly and saw God answering it.

How do you feel about praying it regularly?

13. What is the significance of v.31?

Apply

14. If you feel you can, pray the Acts 4:29-30 prayer.

15. Appendix 2 contains a summary of the things the Apostles prayed for. Pick out another one and pray that too.

16. Use that summary as a basis for regular prayer. Use the prayers as expressed in the Bible or paraphrase them.

Appendix 1 – Some New Testament Prayers

For your own edification, you might like to study these prayers.

Matthew 5:44	Romans 15:5-6	1 Thessalonians 5:23-25
Matthew 6:9-13	Romans 15:10	2 Thessalonians 1:3
Matthew 9:35-38	Romans 15:30-33	2 Thessalonians 1:11-12
Matthew 26:41	Ephesians 1:15-19	2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, 16-17
Luke 6:28	Ephesians 3:14-19	2 Thessalonians 3:1-2
Luke 11:1-4	Ephesians 6:18-20	2 Thessalonians 3:5
Luke 21:36	Philippians 1:3-5; 9-11	1 Timothy 2:1-4
John 17	Colossians 1:3-6a	2 Timothy 1:16-18
Acts 4:24-31	Colossians 1:9-14	Philemon 6
Acts 8:14-17	Colossians 3:15	Hebrews 13:20-21
Acts 9:17-18	Colossians 4:2-4	James 1:5
Acts 12:5	Colossians 4:12	James 5:14-16
Acts 20:36	1 Thessalonians 1:2-3	3 John 2
Romans 1:8-10	1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 (especially 12-13)	
Romans 10:1		

Blessings in the epistles

Romans 15:13	Ephesians 1:2	2 Thessalonians 1:2
Romans 16:20b	Philippians 1:2; 4:23	2 Thessalonians 3:16
1 Corinthians 1:3	Colossians 1:2b	2 Timothy 1:2
1 Corinthians 16:23	Colossians 4:18b	2 Peter 1:2
2 Corinthians 1:2	1 Thessalonians 1:1	2 John 3
Galatians 1:3	1 Thessalonians 5:28	

Appendix 2- A Summary Of The Prayer Topics We Have Covered

Scan down these topics and pray similar prayers for your family, your friends and your church.

Ponder the Bible passages for extra understanding and inspiration.

Study 1 – Praying for eyes to be opened – revelation, insight.

- Ephesians 1:15-20

Study 2 – Praying for our leaders.

- Acts 12:5
- Hebrews 13:17-19
- 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

Study 3 – Praying for holiness.

- John 17:17
- Philippians 1:9-11
- 1 Thessalonians 3:13
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Study 4 – Praying for spiritual maturity in Jesus' followers.

- Colossians 1:28-29
- 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Study 5 – Praying for Holy Spirit power.

- Acts 8:14-17
- Acts 9:17-19
- Ephesians 3:14-21

Study 6 – Praying for protection in the spiritual battle.

- John 17:11-12, 15
- Romans 15:31
- 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

Study 7 – Praying for relationships.

- John 17:20-23
- Romans 15:5-6
- 1 Thessalonians 3:12

Study 8 – Praying we will live lives worthy of God and pleasing to Him.

- Colossians 1:9-14
- 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Study 9 – Praying for God to be glorified.

- Romans 15:5-6
- Philippians 1:9-11
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Study 10 – Evangelism: Praying for boldness and miracles.

- Acts 4:23-31
- Matthew 9:35-38

