

# **Prayer That Aligns with God's Bigger Plans**

**A Bible Study Lesson of The Mt. Zion Church**

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**Introduction:** What is prayer? Webster’s Dictionary defines it as “an address (such as a petition) to God in word or thought.” Some define it as meditation; others refer to it as simply talking to God. In church, we are often taught to pray in a certain manner or with scripted words. We learn specific prayers to pray before meals and before bedtime. One of the things the disciples asked Jesus to teach them was prayer. In Matthew 6, they were asking for Jesus’ style/method of prayer. Jesus teaches them us a model prayer. In that prayer He gave them some basic components to include in a prayer such as:

1. praise God for who He is,
2. ask for forgiveness for our sins,
3. ask for what we need, and
4. submit or yield to His will.

The challenge with these learned prayers and methods of praying is that they can become highly ritualized and routine. Prayer can become more about saying the “right words” in the “right tone” instead of speaking to God from our hearts. Prayer should be a result of the relationship and connection we have with God.

I learned this best in college when I was a member of the campus gospel choir. We had a member who was a new Christian, and she often asked others how she should pray. Someone told her to simply talk to God about what was on her heart. The prayers she prayed sounded as if she were talking to a friend on the phone. They were conversational and simple prayer, yet beautiful as they were truly from her heart and reflected the connection she felt with God.

In the following lesson, we will explore how prayer aligns our hearts with God’s will and prepares us for greater responsibility. Prayer is how we connect with God and hear His plans for our lives. By the end of this lesson, students will deepen their understanding of the purpose of prayer and how it connects us with the plan God has for each of us.

**Key Questions to Answer by the End of This Lesson Include:**

- How would you describe your prayer life?
- What does consistent prayer produce spiritually?
- How can prayer reshape how we steward God’s blessings?

**Key Scriptures:** Philippians 4:6–7; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

## I. Prayer – A Lifestyle

When should we pray? How should we pray? These aren't small questions—they get right to the heart of our relationship with God. Our Scriptures today speak clearly into both. Philippians 4:6 says, “In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God,” and 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray continually.”

In both passages, Paul is urging believers toward something steady and strong—a **real, active, ongoing prayer life**. He's not telling us we must pray 24/7/365 without ever stopping. That's not the point. The point is **consistency**. The point is building a rhythm of turning to God again and again throughout the day. It's about making intentional space for Him—not squeezing Him in when nothing else is happening.

Think about it this way: what would happen if you never talked to your spouse or your best friend? What if the only time you spoke was before a meal or when life was falling apart? That relationship wouldn't grow. It wouldn't deepen. It would slowly drift. Relationships are built on regular, meaningful conversation. They grow through shared moments, honest words, and intentional time. The same is true with God. Paul is calling us to more than emergency prayers or polite blessings over dinner. He's inviting us into **consistent conversation**—ongoing dialogue. That means carving out focused time to speak honestly with Him. It also means slowing down enough to listen. Prayer isn't just about presenting a list; it's about cultivating a relationship.

Paul didn't just teach this—he lived it. Throughout his letters, we see what continual prayer looks like in real life. In Romans 1:9, he wrote, “Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.” In Ephesians 6:18, he wrote “Praying always with all prayer and supplication.” And in Colossians 1:3, he says, “Praying always for you.”

Notice the repetition: *always... without ceasing... always*. This wasn't occasional for Paul. Prayer wasn't a compartment of his life—it was woven into everything. It shaped his thinking. It fueled his ministry. It anchored his relationships. Communication with God wasn't an afterthought—it was **foundational**. It was part of who he was and what he did, every single day. And that's the invitation for us too: not perfection, not performance—but a steady, faithful rhythm of coming back to God.

## *BIGGER Thinking Questions*

- What does your prayer life say about your relationship with God? What steps can you take to enhance your prayer life?
- When you pray, are you holding one-sided conversations? How can you create space to hear from God?

## **II. Prayer – Movement from Anxiety to Trust / Chaos to Peace—*Philippians 4: 6-7***

*Philippians 4: 6-7* <sup>6</sup>Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

Making prayer a lifestyle changes us—and it brings real, tangible benefits. When we pray continually, when we choose again and again to bring everything to God, He meets us there. In *Philippians 4:6*, we are told, “Do not be anxious about anything,” and instead to bring it all to God in prayer. Paul calls believers to pray about their circumstances rather than spiral in worry over them. That’s a bold shift. It means admitting we cannot fix everything on our own. It means acknowledging that we are not the ones in control—and that God is.

Taking our issues, problems, and concerns to God is more than a coping strategy; it is an act of faith. It is a declaration that we trust Him. And Scripture reminds us what faith really is. *Hebrews 11:1* says, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith means trusting even when we don’t see the outcome.

So why do we worry? Often, it’s because we don’t know how things will turn out. We worry about the consequences of a wrong decision. We worry about what might happen next. Sometimes, we even worry in the middle of a blessing.

Think back to when you got a new job. Was there excitement? Absolutely. But was there also that quiet fear—*Can I really do this?* Or when you brought home a newborn baby. Joy filled the room, but so did questions—*Will I be a good parent? Am I ready for this?* Both were blessings from God. And yet, in both cases, the final outcome was unknown. The uncertainty tempted you to worry.

When anxiety creeps in—whether in hardship or in blessing—God calls us to trust Him with our circumstances. He invites us to remember that He is the Provider of every resource and every opportunity placed in our hands. Trusting Him looks like this: we take every situation—big or small—and deliberately place it in His hands. We release control. We surrender the outcome. And honestly, is there any safer place to put your life?

When we choose faith over fear, God gives us something we cannot manufacture on our own—peace *which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*. This is not ordinary peace. It is peace that doesn't make sense. Peace in the middle of chaos. Peace in seasons of grief. Peace when everything feels like it is falling apart. Peace when you truly do not know what to do next.

Worry leaves our minds exposed. In anxious moments, we are vulnerable to lies, to fear, to distorted thinking, and to the whispers of the enemy. But when we bring our fears to God in prayer, He stands guard. His peace becomes a shield around our hearts and minds. It blocks out the voices that create doubt and confusion. It steadies us when everything around us feels unstable.

God's peace doesn't just calm us—it protects us. It anchors our thoughts in His truth. It keeps our hearts aligned with His will. And it reminds us, repeatedly, that no matter what we face, we are not facing it alone.

### *BIGGER Thinking Questions*

- How have you seen prayer change your situation and move it from anxiety to peace?
- Trusting God is an essential part of effective stewardship. What do you need to trust God with today so that you can use His resources for His glory?

### **III. Prayer – In Daily Living—1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18**

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18* <sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> **pray continually**, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

Prayer is not reserved for emergencies. It is not a last resort when things fall apart. Prayer is meant to be woven into **every part** of our lives. It is just as meaningful in celebration as it is in crisis. It is just as necessary on an ordinary Tuesday afternoon as it is in a season of heartbreak.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18, Paul gives us a snapshot of what this kind of life looks like: “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Notice how interconnected those commands are—joy, prayer, gratitude. They aren’t separate spiritual activities we schedule into different boxes. They flow together. They overlap. They shape a lifestyle. The danger is that we begin to segment prayer. We pray for crises but not for clarity. We pray for big decisions but ignore the small ones. We pray when we feel desperate but drift when life feels steady. Paul removes that option in verse 17: “pray continually.” Keep the lines of communication open. Don’t hang up. Don’t disconnect. Live in ongoing conversation with God.

Pray in all situations—when life is good and when it’s painfully hard. Pray when you are exhausted and when you are energized. Sometimes prayer will be bold and confident. Sometimes it will be quiet and tearful. Sometimes it will simply be, “Lord, help.” All of it counts. All of it matters.

And here is the reason we can approach God this way: because of Jesus. Through Him, we have access. Through Him, we are welcomed—not tolerated, not dismissed, but invited. We can come before God in every situation without fear. We can open our hearts honestly. We can bring our doubts, our gratitude, our confusion, and our praise.

Consistent and faithful prayer is not about performance; it is about relationship. It is about living aware that God is near and available. When prayer becomes a lifestyle, we stop seeing it as an obligation and start seeing it as oxygen. We breathe it in throughout the day. We return to it naturally. And in doing so, we remain anchored to the One who holds every part of our lives together.

### *BIGGER Thinking Questions*

- In what specific areas of your life have you unintentionally *closed the line of communication* with God, and what would it look like to reopen it?

## **IV. Conclusion – My Prayer Life**

Prayer is how we communicate with God. It is the space where we pour out our hearts honestly and where we quiet ourselves long enough to hear His voice. It is where we begin to understand His will and intentionally align our hearts with it. Prayer is not a ritual to check off—it is the lifeline of the relationship.

If we want to be faithful stewards of our relationship with God, we must spend time with Him. Every healthy relationship requires attention, presence, and intentional investment. Our walk with God is no different. Time in prayer is not wasted time; it is foundational time. It shapes our perspective. It corrects our priorities. It reminds us of who we belong to.

This lesson challenges us to take a serious look at our personal prayer lives. Not someone else's. Not the ideal version in our heads. Ours. Are we truly opening our hearts to God—or just offering surface-level words? Are we inviting Him into every area of our lives—or only the parts that feel spiritual?

Remember, prayer is the doorway to **deeper growth, greater impact, and a life fully aligned with God's purposes**. It is the key to bigger work—not because we strive harder, but because we stay connected to the One who does the work through us.

**Action Step:**

For the next seven days, set aside a specific, uninterrupted 10-minute window each day to pray intentionally. During that time, bring one blessing, one burden, and one decision before God—and consciously place each into His hands.