

SESSION 6

CONNECTED THROUGH PRAYER



*What do you miss most when
the power goes out?*

QUESTION #1

#BSFLprayer

Support your church with prayer.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

“I’ll pray for you.”

Author Philip Yancey tells about a Chinese pastor who regularly leads converts in public baptism on the banks of a river, even after spending 20 years in prison because of his faith in Christ. Everyone present at these events understands their participation in baptism could lead to arrest and imprisonment. Yancey asked the pastor, “What can Christians in the rest of the world do for you?” The pastor replied: “You can pray. Please tell the church to pray for us.”¹

Hearing this, Yancey wanted to respond: “Yes, of course, but we honestly do want to help. What else can we do?” In time, he learned that Christians who have no access to earthly power believe prayer gives them access to a greater power. They understand we are engaged in a battle against spiritual forces (see Eph. 6:12).

In this session, we will look at the importance of praying for one another in the church. Biblical church membership calls for Christians to regularly intercede for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

WHAT DOES **THE BIBLE** SAY?

Ephesians 6:18-22 (NIV)

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,

20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

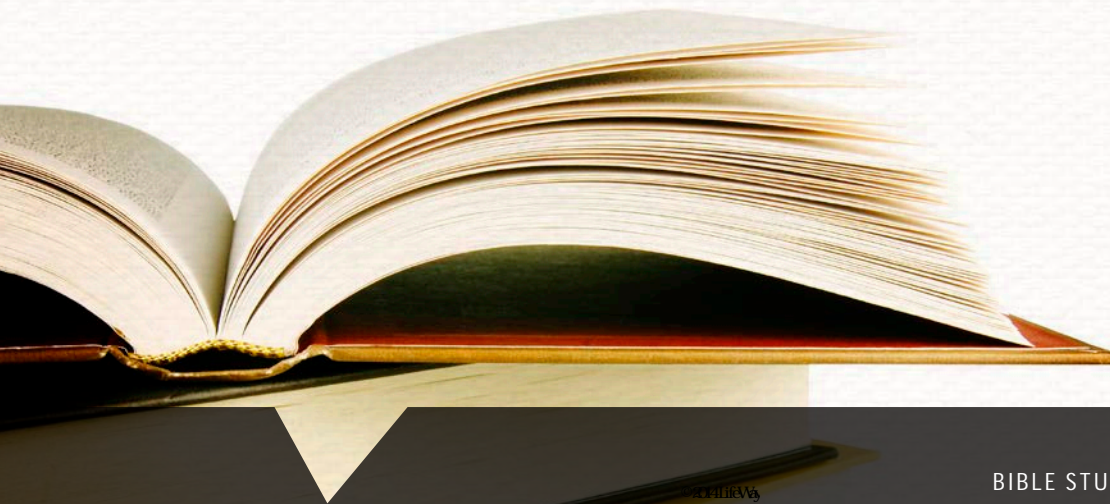
21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.

22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

Key Words

Mystery of the gospel

(v. 19)—The gospel, the good news of new life through faith in Jesus, was once hidden, a mystery. God has now made it known, though it remains a mystery to many.



Ephesians 6:18

If our purpose as a church were simply to socialize, we could thrive on our own steam. But the church is the body of Christ on assignment to accomplish the greatest mission the world has ever known. Plus, we have a vicious enemy trying to defeat us at every turn (see 1 Pet. 5:8). For these reasons and more, we need prayer.

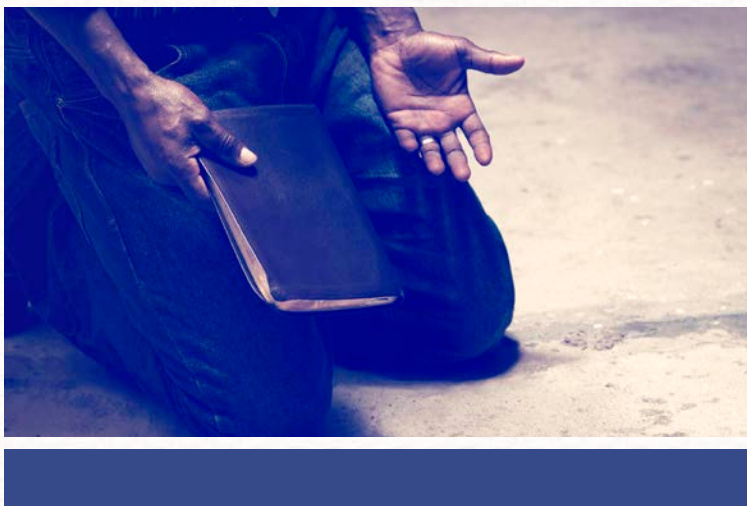
In Ephesians 6:10-17, Paul advised believers to put on the full armor of God as preparation to engage in spiritual warfare. After describing the equipment necessary to fight such a battle, Paul gave this word on how to win: pray. Specifically, he called for his readers to:

- ▶ **Pray at all times.** Maintain a continuous dialog with God (see 1 Thess. 5:16). We should be aware that God is always accessible to us, and we should continually reach out to Him.
- ▶ **Pray in the Spirit.** We are to communicate with God through the Holy Spirit's power. As we do so, the scope and variety of our communication should be wide enough to encompass every kind of need as we pray all kinds of prayers and present to God every request.
- ▶ **Pray with all perseverance.** This means we don't intercede for others once or twice and then forget about it. We're encouraged to keep asking, keep seeking, and keep knocking (see Luke 11:9-10) because God honors our persistence.

The type of prayer Paul had in mind was intercession: praying for other believers. When we love our brothers and sisters in Christ, we actively want the best for them. **We intercede for them through prayer because we believe there are no limits on what God can provide.**

How does the command to pray at all times influence our daily routines?

QUESTION #2



Ephesians 6:19-20

When Paul wrote this letter, he was a prisoner awaiting trial in Rome. Yet his request wasn't that he be released or spared. Instead, he asked the Ephesians to pray that he would speak the right words with boldness and share the gospel even in chains. Paul knew he would have a hearing before the Roman authorities, perhaps even in the presence of the emperor. Because his ministry calling was to take the gospel "before the Gentiles and their kings" (Acts 9:15), Paul viewed this audience with Rome's rulers as an ideal opportunity to fulfill God's mission for him.

I find it interesting that even Paul needed God's help to say the right words at the right time and to speak boldly. Paul believed God would act in response to the prayers of fellow Christians interceding on his behalf. Paul craved the prayers of his fellow church members.

Spiritual leaders are prime targets for Satan's attacks. If he can bring leaders down, he can negatively impact others in the kingdom of God. Here are some practical suggestions for interceding on behalf of your pastors and other church leaders:

- ▶ **Pray for their preaching and teaching.** Pray that God will give them wisdom, insight, and words to speak.
- ▶ **Pray for their families.** Pastors often struggle with neglecting their families due to church demands. They agonize over criticism of their family.
- ▶ **Pray for protection.** Ask God to strengthen church leaders against temptation toward greed, adultery, anger, and other sins the Devil would use to destroy their ministry.
- ▶ **Pray for physical and mental health.** Ask God to fill church leaders with wisdom and discernment so they can lead well and make sound decisions.

What keeps us from being more aware of our church leaders' prayer needs?

QUESTION #3



Ephesians 6:21-22

Paul's request for prayer was a common theme in his letters to the early churches. (See Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:3-4; and 2 Thess. 3:1-2). And if Paul needed prayer to participate in the mission of the church, surely you and I can benefit by praying for the members of our churches—and by asking them to pray for us.

Maybe you're wondering: *How can I know what to pray for when I'm interceding for others?* The answer is that you must make an effort to stay abreast of how you can pray for your fellow church members. In fact, that's one of your responsibilities as a church member.

Of course, it's ideal when brothers and sisters in Christ take the initiative to request prayer for specific needs. It's also helpful when churches have systems in place to quickly and appropriately make the congregation aware of situations requiring prayer. It was for this reason that Paul sent Tychicus to the Ephesians and other churches—to encourage them, and to let them know how they could pray for Paul's needs.

The speed and accessibility of modern communication means our ability to stay informed of prayer needs is truly limitless. Here are a few ways you can stay connected and pray for others:

- ▶ Touch base with the people you're praying for to find out what's going on in their lives. Visit, call, email, or write. Invest time to move past the surface and find out their spiritual needs and goals.
- ▶ Write down prayer requests so you can pray persistently and go back later to ask for updates.
- ▶ Access resources from mission organizations to learn about how missionaries are spreading the gospel throughout the U.S. and across the world—and about the different ways you can pray for them.

How do we determine and prioritize our prayer needs?

QUESTION #4

How can we use the tools at our disposal to more fully support one another through prayer?

QUESTION #5

"Because my pastor cannot do all things in his own power, I will pray for his strength and wisdom daily."

—THOM RAINER, *I AM A CHURCH MEMBER*

TIME TO PRAY

Look back at the pie chart you created on page 53. Recreate the chart to represent how you will spend your time during a typical day this week.

How will you incorporate prayer into each section of your day?

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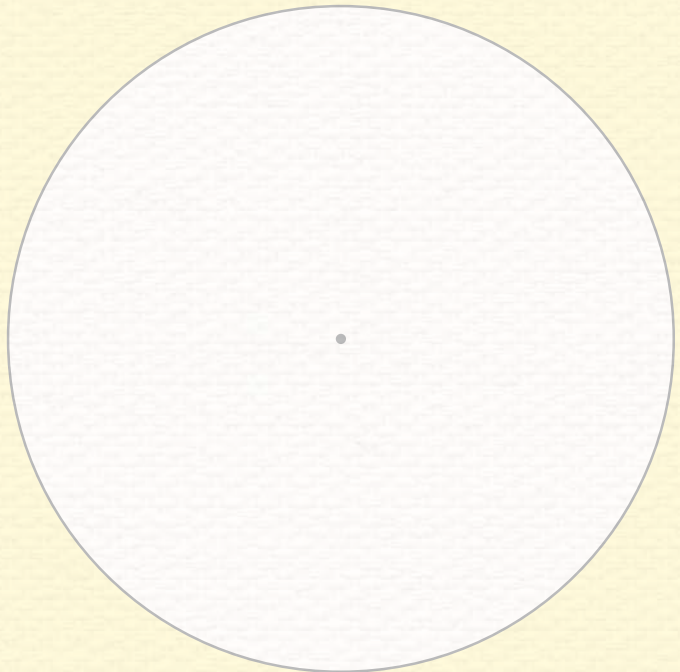
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LIVE IT OUT

God works through the prayers of His people. Therefore, consider these practical ways to pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ:

- ▶ **Pray for salvation.** Many people miss the benefits of church membership because they are not part of the church. Pray for the salvation of at least one person who needs it.
- ▶ **Pray for church leaders.** Commit to pray five minutes each day for your pastor(s) and church leaders. (*Note: this works best when you ask them for prayer requests.*)
- ▶ **Become educated about at least one missionary's needs.** Pray for that missionary and his or her work every day for at least one month.



Prayer grants us access to the power and presence of God. When we believe that, "I'll pray for you" becomes a solemn responsibility and a life-changing promise within the body of Christ.

Heart of the Matter



Through their son's unexpected health crisis, Matt Hammitt, lead singer of the award-winning band Sanctus Real, and his wife, Sarah, rediscovered the meaning of childlike faith.

"I don't know if you've ever experienced a time in your life when a single moment changes everything and takes you down a new path: 'Something is wrong with your baby's heart.' In that moment, my life changed. After I heard those

words, a flood of thoughts and questions rushed through my head, and they haven't stopped yet."



To continue reading "Heart of the Matter" from *HomeLife* magazine, visit BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles.



My group's prayer requests

My thoughts

1. Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference* (Zondervan, 2006), p. 117

Community

By its very definition, community refers to a group of people who share something in common. The church is a community that shares a common faith in Christ. No believer can fully function, grow, or serve Christ apart from the community of faith.

Culture

When people from different backgrounds and ethnicities come together in a community of faith, it gets the world's attention. Despite our differences, we are one in Christ, and the world has no basis for understanding that. Our unity as a church points to Christ.