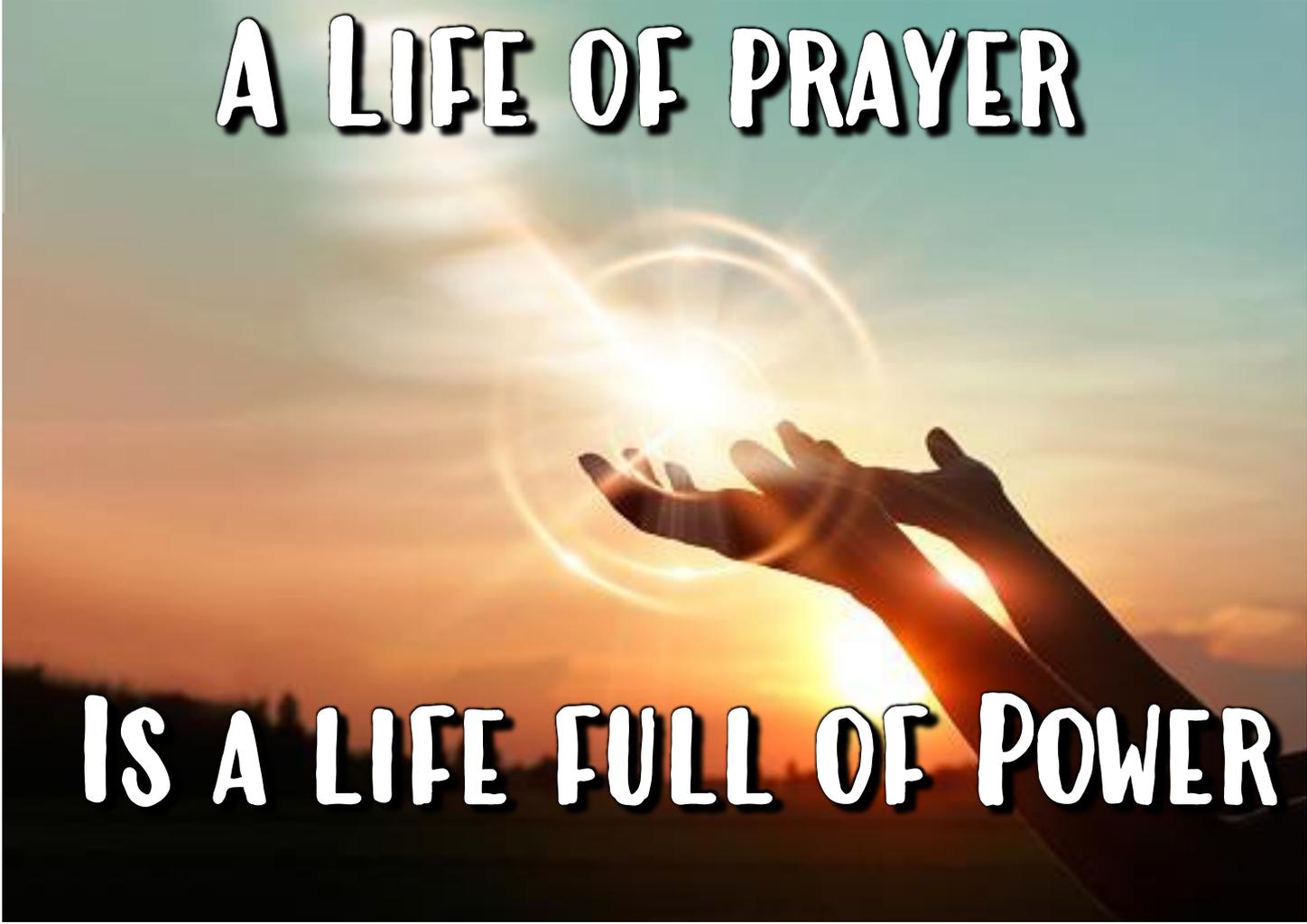


Afrikaans Christian Church Waikato

A LIFE OF PRAYER

A hand is shown in silhouette, holding a glowing, circular orb of light. The background is a sunset or sunrise sky with warm orange and yellow tones. The text 'IS A LIFE FULL OF POWER' is overlaid on the bottom of the image in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

IS A LIFE FULL OF POWER

Sermon

&

Biblestudy discussions

7 Studies

*The sermon recordings can be viewed on the church's
YouTube channel: ACK Waikato Church*

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1. Prayer is a privilege and a responsibility

Scripture reading: Hebrews 4:15-16, 19-25

Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV

¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 10:19-25 NIV

¹⁹Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching

Prayer is a privilege.

Ps 27:4

One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

Prayer is a privilege, because access to God in the Old Testament was very limited: Only the high priest had the privilege of entering the Most Holy Place of God once a year.

We have the privilege of approaching the heavenly Sanctuary with boldness at any time in prayer!

We have gained this privilege **through Jesus Christ**, the perfect **high priest!**

In what ways is Jesus' High Priestship perfect?

1. Jesus' office as our High Priest is eternal.

Heb 7:24 “but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.”

Key: *The priesthood of the old testament was temporary. Jesus' priesthood is eternal!*

2. Jesus intercedes for us with God.

Heb 5:1 Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

Heb 7:25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Rom 8:34 ... at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Key: *Jesus pleads with God that He will provide us with everything we need to live a life that pleases Him.*

3. Jesus' sacrifice is a perfect sacrifice.

Heb 10:2 Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

Key: *Jesus sacrificed himself once and for all so that we can gain access to the heart of God!*

4. Jesus can have compassion for our weaknesses

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Key: We do not worship an impersonal God. We worship a God who has fully shared in our humanity in order to have compassion.

Jesus' purpose and passion as our high priest is to bring us closer to God!

Prayer is a responsibility.

A. We need to make time for prayer.

Heb 10:22 let us draw near to God...

Key: To build a good relationship, you need to invest time in that relationship.

B. We need to learn how to pray.

Heb 10:22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings

B1. A sincere heart.

Ps.24:3-4 Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

Heb 10:22 having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience...

B2. Full assurance of faith.

Heb 11:6 ...anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Key: *God wants us to trust He will hear and reward us on the basis of what Jesus has done for us!*

C. We need to learn what to pray for.

Heb 4:16 Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience,

Key: *God wants us to bring our needs to Him. He wants to provide for us and give us His grace!*

Small Group Discussion Week 1

1. Welcome everyone; make sure everyone knows each other and are comfortable (give opportunity for people to quickly share how each one is doing).

2. Open with prayer.

3. **Read:** Heb 4:15-16, Heb 10:19-25

4. **Discuss:**

"What stood out to you in the Scripture reading and the sermon on Sunday?"

5. **Discuss:**

In what ways do you see prayer as a privilege and in what ways do you see prayer as a responsibility? If you want to, share some of your joys and frustrations in prayer...

6. **Prayer is a privilege because Jesus is our high priest!**

6.1 **Point 1+2: Jesus as our eternal priest intercedes for us with God.**

Read: Heb 7:23-25, Rom 8:34

Discuss: How does knowing that not only do you pray to God through Jesus but that Jesus prays to God on your behalf affect your life?

6.2 **Point 3: Jesus' sacrifice is a perfect sacrifice**

Read: Heb 10:1-10, Heb 10:19-20

Discuss: In what ways is Jesus' sacrifice better than the sacrifices offered in the Old Testament? How does this sacrifice become the basis for our prayer life?

6.4 Point 4: Jesus Can Sympathize With Us

Read: Heb 4:15, Heb 5:1-2

Discuss: How did the high priests in the Old Testament have compassion on the people? How did Jesus sympathize with mankind? What impact does this have on how we draw close to Him?

7. Prayer is a **privilege**. (Heb 10:19) But prayer is **also a responsibility**.(Heb 10:22).

Read through the aspects on why prayer is a responsibility (see sermon notes) and discuss which of the principles you will apply in your prayer life this week.

8. **Pray** for each other (2-2 or 3-3).

2. How to pray for believers in a world full of evil

Scripture Reading: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

¹This letter is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy. We are writing to the church in Thessalonica, to you who belong to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

³Dear brothers and sisters, we can't help but thank God for you, because your **faith is flourishing** and your **love for one another is growing**. ⁴We proudly tell God's other churches about your **endurance** and **faithfulness** in all the **persecutions and hardships** you are suffering. ⁵And God will use this persecution to show his justice and **to make you worthy of his Kingdom**, for which you are **suffering**. ⁶In his justice he will pay back those who persecute you.

⁷And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come with his mighty angels, ⁸in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power. ¹⁰When he comes on that day, he will **receive glory** from his holy people—**praise** from all who believe. And this includes you, for you believed what we told you about him.

¹¹So we **keep on praying** for you, asking our God to **enable you to live a life worthy** of his call. May he give you the **power to accomplish** all the **good things** your **faith** prompts you to do.

¹²Then the **name of our Lord Jesus will be honored** because of the way you live, and you will be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the **grace** of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Paul begins by thanking God:

- a. Because their **"faith is flourishing."**
- b. Because their **"love for one another is growing."**
- c. For their **"endurance and faithfulness in all the persecutions and hardships they are suffering."**

The **basis** and **framework** for Paul's prayer is the work of **grace** that God is doing in the lives of the congregation and believers!

The **circumstances** in which the believers lived - Suffering.

Two things that are important to believers who are suffering and being persecuted:

i. **God sees** and God will not leave injustice unpunished forever!
verse 6-7: *"⁶In his justice he will pay back those who persecute you.*

⁷And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come with his mighty angels,”

ii. Suffering in the lives of believers is never meaningless.

Verse 5: “⁵And God will use this persecution to show his justice and **to make you worthy of his Kingdom**, for which you are **suffering.**”

Verse 10: “¹⁰When he comes on that day, he will **receive glory** from his holy people—**praise** from all who believe. And this includes you, for you believed what we told you about him.”

Paul’s prayer : (verse 11-12) “¹¹So we **keep on praying** for you, asking our God to **enable you to live a life worthy** of his call. May he give you the **power to accomplish** all the **good things** your **faith** prompts you to do. ¹²Then the **name of our Lord Jesus will be honored** because of the way you live, and you will be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the **grace** of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.

a. That God will make them **worthy** of the life to which He has called them!

Eph 4:1 “*1*Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.”

b. That God will “give you the **power to accomplish** all the **good things** your **faith** prompts you to do”.

Ps 127:1a “*Unless the Lord builds a house, the work of the builders is wasted.*”

The PURPOSE of this prayer?

(verse 12) “¹²Then the **name of our Lord Jesus will be honored** because of the way you live, and you will be honored

along with him. This is all made possible because of the **grace** of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.

i. **It is about God's honour!**

ii. The believers will also **be glorified** by God!

Everything is only possible through God's **GRACE** in Jesus Christ.

Small Group Discussion Week 2

1. **Welcome** everyone, make sure everyone knows each other.

2. Open with a **prayer**

3. **Say:** "We are busy with a series on **PRAYER**.

The theme is "A Life of Prayer is a Life Full of Power!"

We will look at different prayers that Paul prayed for congregations and believers and what we can learn from them. This week we will look at Paul's prayer for the Christians in Thessalonica recorded in **2 Thessalonians 1:3-12**.

4. Give opportunity for group members to give **feedback** if last week's message and study brought any **change** in their prayers/life.

5. **Read** aloud **2 Thessalonians 1:1-12**.

6. **Ask**, "*What struck you when you read this passage or listened to Sunday's sermon?*"

Give opportunity for feedback and discussion.

7a. What does **Paul** thank **God** for in this passage?

b. What do **we** usually give thanks for most in **our** prayers?

8. What can you specifically **thank** God for (signs of His **grace** you see) in your own life, and in the lives of your family and/or the congregation? Think about this and share with each other?

9a. How does Paul think, speak, and pray about the **unjust hardships** experienced by Christians?

b. What are the most important **perspectives** we need to remember when we, and other Christians, experience suffering and hardship? (2 things in **Verses 5-9**)

What does this mean for **you**?

10a. **Read verse 11** again. **Explain** in your own words what **TWO things** Paul prays for, in verse 11.

b. Can/will you pray this for **your** family, congregation?

c. What are the **practical implications** if you pray these two things specifically for your family and congregation?

11a. What do you think **Paul's main purpose** was in this prayer?

b. What does this say about the **purpose** of our prayers?

12. Give opportunity for **any other questions or discussion**.

13. Give opportunity to **pray** for each other in **groups** of 2 or 3, for our families and congregation.

Look at what you answered at **point 8** and make it part of your **prayer!**

Prayer is about a personal relationship with God.

It's an honest open-hearted conversation with your heavenly Father."

3. Prayer as a weapon for ministry

Scripture reading: Romans 15: 30-33 (NKJV)

The power of our spiritual life, ministry lies in prayer.
The prayers of Paul show constant themes.

Col 3: 1-2 *"¹Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

Prayer is about a **personal relationship** with my heavenly Father.

Here we read a special prayer of Paul, praying for himself and specifically his ministry, asking the believers to pray with and for him. Prayer is a powerful weapon in ministry and in the salvation of people.

Scripture Reading: Rom 15: 23-33 (NKJV)

²³But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, ²⁴whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. ²⁵But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ²⁶For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. ²⁷It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. ²⁸Therefore, when I have performed this

and have sealed to them his fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

²⁹But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. ³⁰Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, ³¹that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³²that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.

³³Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Paul urges the believers on several occasions to pray for him and specifically for his ministry!

(For example: Eph 6:12, 18-20; 1 Thess 5: 23-25; 2 Co 1:8-11).

4 important aspects that emerge in this prayer:

1. This prayer was a very serious matter to Paul!

“BEG” -“*strive together with me in prayers*”

Ephesians 6:18-20

*¹⁸**Pray** in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your **prayers** for all believers everywhere.*

*¹⁹And **pray** for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God’s mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. ²⁰I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God’s ambassador. So **pray** that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.*

2. There are two things Paul asks prayer for:

a.) Pray **“that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe.”**

There are still strong opposition today – pray for protection of preachers, spiritual leaders, and missionaries

b.) Paul asks, “***that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.***”

- more than just a gift/financial contribution; may **be accepted** in the **right attitude**.

2 Co 9:12-13a “*So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God.*”

3. Paul asks **that they pray for the continuation of his ministry!**

4. **This prayer of Paul was not answered** as he asked.
Let’s look at a few aspects:

a. prayer does not consist of magic recipes or rhymes

2 Co 12:1-10 - “thorn in the flesh!”

b. Prayer is **about a relationship**.

Small Group Discussion Week 3

1. **Welcome** everyone, make sure everyone knows each other.

2. Open with a **prayer**

3. **Say:** “We are busy with a series on **PRAYER**.

The theme is “A Life of Prayer is a Life Full of Power!”

We will look at different prayers that Paul prayed for congregations and believers and what we can learn from them.

This week we will look at Paul's request for prayer for himself and his ministry as recorded in **Romans 15:23-33**.

4. Give opportunity for group members to give **feedback** how last week's message and study **changed** their prayers/life.

5. **Read aloud Romans 15:23-33**

6. **Ask**, "*What stood out to you when you read this passage or listened to Sunday's sermon?*"

Give opportunity for feedback and discussion.

7. In **Rom 15:30** Paul asks: "*Now I **beg** you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you **strive together with me in prayers to God for me, ...***"

a. Discuss: What do we usually do when someone earnestly asks us to pray for him/her?

b. Who was the last person who asked you for prayer?
Did you pray for him/her?

c. **Why** is it **important** to pray for others?

8. Read **Eph. 6: 18-20**. Talk about why it is important to pray for ministers, pastors, preachers, and leaders?
(See how many different reasons you can find)

9. There are many attacks on preachers and spiritual leaders today.

How should we, as believers, handle this?

10. It is often difficult for people to receive or accept help from others. Why is it important for us to pray for Christians to be

willing not only to help one another but also to accept and seek help from other Christians?

Talk about this. Also share your personal experiences in this regard.

11. How can we pray for the "Continuation of ministry" here in New Zealand and in the world?

What is the Lord pressing on your heart to pray about?

12. Paul's prayer was not answered as he asked.

What does this teach you about PRAYER?

Why are some prayers not answered as we have asked/prayed?

13. Today we really want to pray for EACH OTHER, our MINISTERS and PREACHERS.

Turn to each other in **groups** of 2 or 3. Or if you're on Zoom, give each one a chance to pray for someone specifically in the group and a specific minister or preacher.

Pray for EACH OTHER by name.

Pray for a specific minister or preacher or church leader.

If time allows, use it for fellowship with each other.

Remember:

***“Prayer is about a personal relationship with God.
It's an honest open-hearted conversation with your heavenly***

Small Group Discussion Week 3

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We will look at different prayers that Paul prayed for congregations and believers and what we can learn from them.
This week we will look at Paul's request for prayer for himself and his ministry as recorded in **Romans 15:23-33**.
4. Give opportunity for group members to give **feedback** how last week's message and study **changed** their prayers/life.
5. **Read** aloud **Romans 15:23-33**
6. **Ask**, "*What stood out to you when you read this passage or listened to Sunday's sermon?*"
Give opportunity for feedback and discussion.
7. In **Rom 15:30** Paul asks: "*Now I **beg** you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you **strive together with me in prayers to God for me, ...***"
 - a. Discuss: What do we usually do when someone earnestly asks us to pray for him/her?
 - b. Who was the last person who asked you for prayer?
Did you pray for him/her?
 - c. **Why** is it **important** to pray for others?

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(See how many different reasons you can find)

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Talk about this. Also share your personal experiences in this regard.

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Pray for EACH OTHER by name.

Pray for a specific minister or preacher or church leader.

If time allows, use it for fellowship with each other.

Remember:

“Prayer is about a personal relationship with God. It's an honest open-hearted conversation with your heavenly Father.”

4. Praying for spiritual growth.

Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:9-14

Prayer is about a personal **relationship** with my heavenly Father.

Paul's desire in his prayer for the believers of Colossians, and for all believers, is **that they will grow** in their personal relationship with their heavenly Father and that they will mature **spiritually!**

⁹So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

¹¹We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need.

May you be filled with joy, ¹²always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. ¹³For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

How does Paul pray for the spiritual growth of believers?

1. Paul prays for believers even though he has never personally met them.

*Col 1:8-9 He (Epaphras) has told us...
Since we first heard about you...*

2. Paul regularly prays for the believers.

Col 1:9 So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you.

3. Paul thanks God and asks God for signs of His mercy in the lives of the believers.

Col 1:4-5 For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's people, ⁵which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven.

What does Paul pray for the believers so that they will grow spiritually?

1. Paul asks that they have spiritual wisdom and insight to know God's will.

Col 1:9b We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.

2. Paul asks that their lifestyle be to the glory of the Lord.

Col 1:10 Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord,

Paul tells us how to live to the glory of the Lord:

A. By dedicating our lives to good works.

Col 1:10 *Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.*

Ep 2:10b *He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

B. By growing in our knowledge of God.

Ps. 143:10 *He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

Johannes 7:17 *Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own.*

C. By persevering with patience.

Col 1:11 ¹¹*We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need.*

Phil 4:12-13 *I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength*

D. To thank God with joy.

Col 1:12-14 ¹²***always thanking the Father.*** *He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light.* ¹³*For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son,* ¹⁴*who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.*

Paul's ministry to and prayer for the believers are the same.:

“We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ.” (Colossians 1:28)

Small Group Discussion Week 4

1. **Welcome** everyone, make sure everyone knows each other.
 2. Open with a **prayer**
 3. **Say:** “We are busy with a series on **PRAYER**. The theme is "A Life of Prayer is a Life Full of Power!" We will look at different prayers that Paul prayed for congregations and believers and what we can learn from them. This week we will look at Paul's prayer for the church in **Colossians 1:3-14**. A prayer for spiritual growth.
 4. Give opportunity for group members to give **feedback** how last week's message and study **changed** their prayers/life.
 5. **Read** aloud Colossians 1:3-14
 6. **Ask,** "*What stood out to you when you read this passage or listened to Sunday's sermon?*"
Give opportunity for feedback and discussion.
 7. According to **Colossians 1:4; 1:7**, we can conclude that Paul had not yet met the believers in person. Epaphras founded the congregation in Colossae. Yet, Paul had a deep need to pray for these believers.
- Discuss:** Is there room in your prayers to pray for believers you've never met in person? What can you do to grow in this area of your prayer life?

8. Paul writes in **Col 1:9** “*9So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you.*”

Discuss: What are some of the core things we should regularly pray for ourselves, our family, our congregation?

9. In **Col 1:9b** we read that Paul prayed for the believers because he heard how God worked in their lives. Specifically their faith (v.4), their love (v.4 + v.8) and their hope (v.5).

Discuss: Do you pray with the same intensity for people when you see spiritual progress in their lives as you do when there is crisis? What would you say is the reason for this and why are both important?

10. **Paul prays** to God for the believers in **Colossians**: “*We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.*” (see v.9b)

Discuss: a) Why does Paul pray specifically for spiritual wisdom and insight? Why not just wisdom and insight?

b) Read Col 2:16-18, Col 2:21-23, Why is this prayer so vital to the congregation to whom Paul writes and also to us today?

11. In **v.10** Paul prays that the believers' lifestyle will be pleasing to the Lord and in **v.11-14** He tells us what it means to live a life pleasing to the Lord:

a) We have to give our lives to good works. (v.10a)

b) We have to grow in our knowledge of God. (v.10b)

c) We have to endure patiently with the power of God (v.11)

d) We have to thank God with joy. (v.11b-v.14)

Discuss: Out of the above, what area do you need work on in your prayer life?

End the session by praying for spiritual growth for each other in groups of 2 or 3! Specifically in light of Q11's discussion! Also make use of the prayer guide from "**Open Doors**"!

Remember:

"Prayer is about a personal relationship with God. It's an honest open-hearted conversation with your heavenly Father."

5. Knowing God's power through prayer

Scripture reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

The congregation in Ephesus was a in **very privileged** position. Paul preached and ministered there for a period of **3 years**. The Lord did **many miracles** through Paul, and the Word of the **Lord** grew powerfully!

The congregation in Ephesus also had many **challenges**. **Idol worship** was **practiced** by many. Believers were under great **social and financial pressure** to worship **the Emperor** as well!

In **view of this**, Paul prays for the believers.:

Scripture reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

¹⁵Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere ¹⁶I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, ¹⁷asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. ¹⁸I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

¹⁹I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. ²¹Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. ²²God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. ²³And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

Paul **thanked God** for the signs of **grace** in their lives and **prayed** for the believers in Eph 1:3-14 the light **of all** that God had done for them.

His desire is for God **to enlighten the eyes of their hearts** so that they will see **with clarity what is true of them** in Christ!

Paul prays that God will enlighten the eyes of their hearts so that:

1. They will get to know God better.

Eph 1:17 *17*asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God.

1 Cor 2:14-15 *14*But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. ¹⁵Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others.

2. They will realize how wonderful their hope is.

Eph 1:18 *I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called*

Rom 5:2 *Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. Because **God has called us** and because we **have hope**, it changes how we live now!*

Eph 4:1 *...lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*

3. They will know God's power.

Eph 1:19 *I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him.*

In what does God's power exist?

A. In the Resurrection of Christ

Eph 1:19-20 *This is the same mighty power²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead...*

Eph 3:20 *Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.*

B. In Jesus' rule over everything.

Eph 1:20 *and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand*

Mt 28:18 *“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.”*

Eph 1:20-21 *... seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.²¹ Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.*

C. In Jesus' reign over His church.

Eph 1:22-23 *²²God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. ²³And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.*

Eph 5:29-30 *No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. ³⁰And we are members of his body.*

The church is very precious and special to God!

Small Group Discussion Week 5

1. **Welcome** everyone, make sure everyone knows each other.

2. Open with a **prayer**

3. **Say:** "We are busy with a series on **PRAYER**. The theme is "A Life of Prayer is a Life Full of Power!" We will look at different prayers that Paul prayed for congregations and believers and what we can learn from them. This week we look at Paul's prayer for the congregation in **Ephesus**. Paul's prayer that God will enlighten the eyes of the believers' hearts so that they can see what Jesus has made possible for **them** and so that they will know **God's power**."

4. Give opportunity for group members to give **feedback** how last week's message and study **changed** their prayers/life.

5. **Read** aloud **Ephesians 1:15-23**.

6. **Ask**, "What **struck** you when you read this passage or listened to Sunday's sermon?"
Give opportunity for feedback and discussion.

7. **Read** Ezekiel 36:26, Proverbs 4:23, Matthew 15:18-20
For the Jews, the heart was at the center of man's will and emotions.

Discuss: In view of this, put in your own words what does it mean that *Paul prays that God will enlighten our hearts* or open the eyes of *our hearts* to see? What does this mean for our prayer life?

8. Paul's first prayer request is that God will give believers **spiritual wisdom** and **insight (revelation)** so that they will know Him better.

Discuss: a. Why does Paul pray for this first?

b. Why do we need **spiritual wisdom** and **insight** (revelation) to get to know God better? What is the Holy Spirit's role in the process (see 1 Cor 2:12-13)

c. What are **the practical implications** of this for our prayer **life** and our walk with God?

9. In **Ephesians 1:18**, Paul prays that believers will see the wonderful prospect (hope) his calling holds.

Discuss: a. Read **Rom 8:28-30**. What does God's calling mean in the lives of believers? How does this relate to our future hope (our hope for eternity)?

b. In view of **Eph 4:1**, why do you think it is important to have a clear vision of our calling and hope?

10. In Eph 1:19-23, Paul prays that believers will know God's power.

Discuss:

a) What do you usually think of when you think about God's power? How is Paul's description of God's power the same/different from what you think?

b) In **Ephesians 1:20**, Paul describes God's power working in the lives of believers as the same power at work when He raised Jesus from the dead. And in **Philippians 3:20**, Paul says that it is his wish to know more about this power. Why do you think Paul prays that the believers will know this power? What would happen in our lives if we truly knew God's power?

c) In **v.20-21**, Paul says God has **appointed Christ** above **every authority, power, and dominion**. How does this

knowledge affect how you think about the world and about the evil forces at work in the world?

d) Read Ephesians 1:22-23. How do you understand the church's position and role in the world? How does Paul encourage believers to think and pray about the church?

Close the discussion by praying **2-2** or **3-3** for each other's needs and praying specifically that what Paul is writing here will become more and more true in our lives!

Remember:

“Prayer is about a personal relationship with God. It's an honest open-hearted conversation with your heavenly Father.”

6. Knowing God's love through prayer

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

Quiet time before the Lord:

“⁹I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. ¹⁰For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return.”

(Philippians 1:9-10)

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21^(NLT)

¹⁴When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, ¹⁵the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. ¹⁶I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. ¹⁷Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. ¹⁸And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you

will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

²⁰Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. ²¹Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

A prayer for **power**.

Phil. 4:13 (NIV) *“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”*

Eph. 6:10 (NIV) *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*

Phil. 2:13 *“For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.”*

Power for what purpose?

Eph. 3:16 *“I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with **inner strength** through his Spirit.*

2 Co. 4:16 (NASB2020) *“I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with **inner strength** through his Spirit.”*

The **purpose** of prayer for POWER is to gain inner strength:

Eph. 3:17 *“Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong.”*

Jn. 3:16 *“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”*

Love should be the most important characteristic of a believer's life

Love for one another shows that we are truly children of God

Love is everything and without love, I am nothing! (1 Co. 13:2 *"If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing."*

Paul prays that God will do the **humanly impossible** for the believers!

Eph. 3:18-19 *"And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God."*

The word for '**know**', means a very intimate and personal knowledge through experience!

Paradox: to know Christ's love that **surpasses all knowledge**!

Eph. 3:19b *"Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God"*

Eph. 3:20 *"Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think."*

Small Group Discussion Week 6

1. Welcome everyone, make sure everyone knows each other.
2. Open with a **prayer**.

3. **Say:** "We are busy with a series on **PRAYER**. The theme is "A Life of Prayer is a Life Full of Power!" We will look at different prayers that Paul prayed for congregations and believers and what we can learn from them. This week we look at Paul's prayer for the congregation in **Ephesus** written in Ephesians 3. Paul's prayer is that God will give them extraordinary strength.

4. Give opportunity for group members to give **feedback** how last week's message and study **changed** their prayers/life.

5. **Read** aloud **Ephesians 3:14-21**.

6. **Ask,** "What **struck** you when you read this passage or listened to Sunday's sermon?"

Give opportunity for feedback and discussion.

7. "Have you ever felt like there are so many things you would like to do, or want to stop doing or change in your life, but you just can't seem to do it?" Share with each other.

In the sermon it was said that we often experience powerlessness to do what we know is right and what we would like to do:

Read: Phil. 3:14, Eph. 6:10 and Phil. 2:13.

What do you learn from these verses about how it is possible to do the seemingly impossible and to do what God asks of me?

Discuss it with each other and share how **you** experience it.

6. In the sermon it was stated:

Love should be the most important characteristic of a believer's life

Love for one another shows that we are truly children of God

Love is everything and without love, I am nothing! (1 Co. 13:2 *“If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn’t love others, I would be nothing.”*)

i. Do you agree?

ii. How do I make it true in my family, in the small group, in the congregation?

7. Paul prays that God will do the **humanly impossible** for the believers! What is it?

Read: **Eph. 3:18-19** *“And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.”*

i. Why is it **impossible** for us to truly understand, know, and fully experience God's love?

ii. Then talk about why it is **important** that God does enable us to know and experience His love?

iii. How does it change our lives when we begin to understand and experience God's love for us?

8. Read **Eph. 3:20** *“Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”*

i. What does this verse tell you about everything you talked about today?

ii. What does it tell you about the possibility that you will truly better understand and experience God's love when you ask him about it?

Close the discussion by **praying 2-2** or **3-3** for each other's needs and **pray** specifically that you and everyone in the group and the congregation will receive power from God to get to know His love more and to experience it more and deeper!

Remember:

“Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think”

7. Prayer for unity: “Jesus’ prayer”

Scripture reading: John 17:20-26

Scripture Reading: John 17:20-26

²⁰“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

²²“I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. ²³I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. ²⁴Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

²⁵“O righteous Father, the world doesn’t know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. ²⁶I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.”

Why is this unity so important?

- The unity of the church is **grounded** in the unity of **God**.
- The unity of the church is a unity of love, calling and witnessing.
- On the basis of this unity, the world will be able to believe that God the Father sent Jesus.

Jesus' prayer

In John 17 Jesus prayed for:

- **Himself** and His work (v.1-5)
- His **disciples** (v.6-8)
- The needs of the **disciples** (v.9-19)
- For the **future Church** (v.20-26)

It is a prayer for unity, so that the church's **testimony** will be effective.

Jesus prays that the **love** of the Father will also be in the disciples.
Jesus prays that the church will reach its glorious destination.

The **church** exists out of Jesus-followers that must be **characterized** by:

- (a) the **uniform following** of Jesus.
- (b) genuine **love** that results in **service**.
- (c) their unity and love as a **testimony** to the world.

Because the church is one,

The world will **believe** that God makes new life possible.

The world can only **believe** what they **see** at church.

Jesus prays that the church will be **one so that** the world can **see** (17:24), **believe** (17:21) and **know** (17:23).

Kol. 3:11 *"In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us."*

Does unity mean we are all alike?

Unity does not mean we are all alike, but instead means that we can be united despite of our differences

The unity in love and service portrays the miraculous power of God.

Unity that shares in Jesus' glory.

The unity between believers is so believable and powerful, **because then** the world will know and believe.

Jn. 12:23 *"Jesus replied, "Now the time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory."*

Jn. 17:22 *"I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one."*

This unity stuns people.

Sociologists like **Rodney Stark** connect the rapid growth of the early church to the love and service emanating from Jesus' prayer:

- Christians cared for all sick people during great plagues in the Roman Empire.
- Churches have taken people from all groups, even enemies, into the church and taught of Jesus' love and service. (Communities were made safer.)
- Women and children were respected, and treated as full members of the church. Because the value of women in the Christian church was considered higher, the church had greater growth and action than the surrounding society that despised and oppressed women.
- Christians also raised all their children.

Christians' service and dedication often cost them their lives. Their unity in love and service was a powerful testimony.

Small Group Discussion Week 7

1. Welcome everyone, make sure everyone knows each other.
2. Open with a **prayer**.

3. **Say**, "We are finishing with our **series on prayer** with this passage.

We looked at different prayers Paul prayed for congregations and believers, and we saw what we could learn from them.

This week we look at a part of **JESUS'** prayer for the church and all believers.

4. Give opportunity for group members to give **feedback** how last week's message and study **changed** their prayers/life.

5. **Say**: "*Before we read; This is an important prayer of Jesus that He prayed the night before He was crucified. In this prayer, Jesus prays specifically for His disciples, but from verse 20 He prays for the believers who will come after the disciples. This is for the church and believers of all time. Jesus prays this part of the prayer specifically for US as well. Let's listen carefully to it and hear what Jesus is praying for us exactly:*

Read aloud John 17:20-26.

6. **Ask**: "*What **struck** you when you read this passage or listened to Sunday's sermon?*"

Give opportunity for feedback and discussion.

7. What does Jesus specifically pray for us?

Talk about it and say how you understand it and what it means to you.

8. What is the basis/motivation that Jesus gives on why Christians and the church/congregation should be a unit?

Look at verses 21 and 22.

9. What result will there be if the church/congregation/believers really live out their unity so that the world can see it?

Verse 21b:

Verse 23b:

10 Does unity mean that everyone should think and feel the same way? Can people who radically differ from each other experience unity? How?

Read Col 3: 11. What is the key/secret?

11. As Christians, how will we react **differently** and treat people differently than the world (society)? Talk about this.

What difference does it make that I belong to Jesus and know how important the unity of believers and the church is to God? How am I going to speak, act, and respond when I differ from others?

12. Give group members an opportunity to talk about how our **unity** as Christians is a powerful **witness** in a broken world full of fear and hurt.

13. Give opportunity for prayer requests and then **pray** for each other.

Pray for the congregation and the leaders.

Pray also for the government and the needs of so many people going through crises.