



NG Study Guide: Eph. 6:18-24 “Reflecting Jesus in Prayer” [2.18.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.

The Study

Thesis: Prayer is about intimate communication with God and inspired by God. It contemplates expressing adoration, praise, making our requests known to God, and interceding on behalf of others. It is hearing God speak and responding with faith and obedience. It is an expression of our desire to see God’s will done on earth as it is in heaven [Mt. 6:10]. Prayer is worship, because through prayer we acknowledge God and our dependence upon Him. Prayer is not intended to be our efforts to get something good or avoid something bad from a cosmic genie. Let’s consider five (5) elements of the Spirit-filled prayer life so that we can be people of prayer:

Pray constantly [18]:

¹⁸ “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end

with all perseverance and supplication ¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

Praying always [18] relates to the idea of intimate communication with God, and regularly seeking to hear from Him and experience His Presence [1 Sam. 3, Mt. 17:5]. Paul similarly encouraged the church at Thessalonica and us when he wrote, “Pray without ceasing” [1Th. 5:17]. “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing” – Martin Luther. *All prayer and supplication* [18] is literally “prayer upon prayer.” The idea is all kinds of prayer: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication (interceding for other’s needs, and your own needs). *In the Spirit* [18] reveals that prayer is ideally inspired by God’s Spirit. We pray to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit [Rom. 8:26-27]. “True prayer is neither a mental exercise nor a vocal performance. It is far deeper than that – it is spiritual transaction with the Creator of Heaven and Earth” – Charles Spurgeon.

Being watchful relates to being spiritually alert. In the Garden of Gethsemane hours before the cross, Jesus told His disciples, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” [Mk. 14:38]. Absent a life of prayer fueled by God’s Spirit you will succumb to the temptation of denying Jesus’ rightful place as king in your life. *With all perseverance* [18] is an exhortation to be enduring in prayer [Lu. 18:1-6]. In essence, keep praying about what matters to you as long as you sense God calling you to do so.

Prays for others [18]:

For all the saints [v.18] reminds believers that they should be interceding for others. *Saints* refers to other followers of Jesus. We pray for saints not to saints as in the Roman Catholic tradition. There is one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus [1Tim. 2:5]. Jesus always lives to make intercession [Heb. 7:25], and we join in His work as we pray for others. We are to pray for one another [Ja. 5:16]. Where the Spirit is moving in God’s people there is prayer for others!

At Calvary Nexus, we gather hundreds of prayer requests each week. There are about three hundred (300) people who receive the prayer requests and have purposed to pray over all or part of the prayer requests. This is a great way to grow in your prayer for others. You can sign up to receive the requests by sending a note to prayer@calvarynexus.org. Similarly, we gather Sunday mornings at 8:15, and Thursday morning at 8:00 in the café for group prayer. This is a great way to intercede and pray for others.

Request prayer [19]:

Paul recognizes his need for prayer when he asks the church to pray *for me* [19]. The Holy Spirit produces an awareness of our need for prayer, and for spiritual transformation. There is a humility before God and man when we ask others to pray for us. It is good to request prayer for physical needs such as healing, and financial provision. And perhaps it is even better to request prayer for spiritual needs such as: holiness, love, sexual purity, victory over life dominating sin, forgiveness for people who have hurt us, gentleness, patience, perseverance, self-control, and eternal focus. Our greatest needs are not physical, but spiritual, and when the Holy Spirit is in control, our prayers focus more on the spiritual.

At Calvary Nexus, I think it is wonderful that there are hundreds of prayer requests each week. But I think it would be best if all of us were asking for prayer for ourselves and those matters that we care about. The more people who come for prayer on Sundays during services the better. We want to cast all our cares upon Him, because we know that he cares for us [1Pet. 5:7]. We yearn to be a house of prayer [Matt. 21:13].

Pray for boldness to advance the gospel [19-20]:

Paul’s specific prayer request was for boldness to proclaim the gospel. Twice he prays for boldness, *that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak* [19-20]. He is asking for prayer to share the hope of Jesus with clarity and courage, and the good news to both Jews and Gentiles. He recognizes that this is the right thing to do when he declares, *as I ought to speak* [20]. Although Paul was imprisoned, and thus an *ambassador in chains* [20], the gospel would not be chained.

Perhaps more of us would be sharing our faith and the gospel if we prayed for boldness. The most common manifestation of the filling of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts is boldness. Where the Spirit is moving in God’s people there is boldness to advance the gospel.

Share your life with others [21-24]:

²¹ "But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; ²² whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts. ²³ Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

Paul was sending his fellow-laborer Tychicus (*Two-khe-kos*) to tell the Ephesians about his condition during his Roman imprisonment. As the church was made aware of Paul's condition they presumably would be moved to pray for him; and when Paul was made aware of their condition he would be praying for their needs as well.

Neighborhood Groups are a great way to share life with people. They often have times of prayer where people learn to become people of prayer. Through our NG, I have been blessed to know that people are praying for me and that I'm praying for them and it is because we are sharing life with one another.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Spend a considerable amount of time praying together and talk about the experience.

Q2. What are some of the challenges to being people of prayer?

Q3. What are some of the lessons that you've learned about prayer that help you to pray?

Q4. What are some of the ways that you'd like to apply this lesson to your life?

"Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Spend extended time in prayer this week and journal about your experience. What did you learn about God, yourself, and prayer?

2. Reread the book of Ephesians and reflect on your position in Christ [Ch. 1-3], and

what it means to walk worthy of Christ (The Spirit-filled life) [Ch.4-6]. Make some notes about verses that are particularly challenging, encouraging, or confusing. Share your observations with others, and look to also get answers to anything confusing.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Pray for your neighbors and their spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. Pray for boldness to share your faith and the gospel with neighbors where you live, work, study, and play.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

