

Discipline #2: CONTINUAL PRAYER – I am always talking to God.
Key Verses for the Series

Col 4:2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

Eph 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints

Phil 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Series Schedule

February 8 – What Does It Mean (& NOT Mean) To Pray?	March 1 – What to Pray For (and Not to Pray For)
February 15 – Why Pray?	March 8 – What to Pray For (and Not to Pray For)
February 22 – How to Pray	March 15 & 22 – Review

What Does It Mean (& NOT Mean) To Pray?

Praying Is Talking to God

1 Tim 2:1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men,

<u>Praising</u> God (prayers)	Telling God that You Know Who He Is (holy, creator, savior, lord of the universe) Telling God that You Want What He Wants
<u>Asking</u> God	To meet your physical and spiritual needs (supplications) To meet the physical and spiritual needs of others (intercessions)
<u>Thanking</u> God (giving of thanks)	For What God Has Done For What God Has Not Done

What Does It NOT Mean?

- Praying is not repeating empty words. (Matthew 6:7)
- Praying is not telling God something He does not know. (Matthew 6:8)
- Praying is not getting God to do something that He would not otherwise do. We must ask according to His will. (Matt 6:9-10; John 14:13-14; James 4:3; 1 John 5:14)
- Praying is not a way to bypass obedience. (Matt 6:12-13; 1 John 3:22; James 5:16)
- Praying is not getting God to work against the choices that people make for themselves. He will help people, but He will not MAKE someone change his mind. (Rom 1; Col 3:1-4)
- Praying is not two-way communication. Through prayer we talk to God. God talks to us through His Word.

Why Pray?

If God knows everything, and knows our needs before we ask (Matthew 6:8), why should we pray at all?

*We pray because we **can**. | We pray because we **should**. | We pray because others **prayed**. | We pray because of **good**.*

1. **We Are to Be Praying Because We CAN (Privilege – It is a great privilege to pray to God.)** – Eph 2:18
2. **We Are to Be Praying Because We SHOULD (Command – We are commanded to pray to God.)** – Luke 18:1
3. **We Are to Be Praying Because OTHERS Prayed** (Praying was characteristic of those that walked with God in the Bible.)
4. **We Are to Be Praying Because of GOOD (Benefits – We ourselves receive many benefits as we pray to God.)**

How To Be Praying

Pray secretly (pray to God, not “to” people; pray to be heard by God, not people) Matt 6:5-6

Pray concisely (more words ≠ better praying – use all the words you need, but don’t pad your prayers) Matt 6:7-13

Pray continually (Luke 18:1; Eph 6:18a; 1 Thes 5:17)

Pray persistently (patiently keep asking) Luke 18:2-8

Pray evangelistically (for boldness and opportunity to share the gospel) Eph 6:19-20; Col 4:3-4)

Pray corporately (for others) Eph 6:18

Pray completely (all) Eph 6:18; Phil 4:6

Pray watchfully (alert and aware of what is going on around you, tuned into danger?) Eph 6:18; Col 4:2

Pray thankfully (Phil 4:6; Col 4:2; 1 Thes 5:18)

Pray proactively / confidently (pray first, not as a last resort – Phil 4:6)

Pray knowingly, seriously & soberly (1 Pet 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.)

What to Pray For: What Did Jesus Pray For? (John 17:14-21)

17:14-15 – Jesus prayed for our spiritual safety → **PROTECTION** – That We Each Would **STAY PURE**

17:16-17 – Jesus prayed for our spiritual maturity → **SANCTIFICATION** – That We Each Would **GROW UP**

17:20-21 – Jesus prayed for our spiritual unity → **VALIDATION** – That We Each Would **WORK TOGETHER**

Praying About Problems: Should Our Prayers Be “Please Take Them Away” or Not?

Are problems a part of life, or something to get out of? Are they part of God’s plan, or in the way of God’s plan? Are there reasons why God allows us to have problems? Should our prayers always be focused on being freed from difficult situations?

We understand that

- (1) God knows everything;*
- (2) God controls everything; and that*
- (3) God loves us.*

So,

- (1) God can answer prayer and change my circumstances; and*
- (2) God could prevent bad circumstances from even happening, but He doesn’t. Why doesn’t He??*

There Are At Least 5 Reasons For Our Hard & Hurtful Circumstances (Which Change the Way We Are Praying):

1. *We experience problems because of SIN’S CURSE.* [infected with a “naughty” disease?]

The entire human race, and even all of creation, is infected by sin, and all experience the results of that sin.

Sickness, pain, sorrow, trouble, and death will be with us – each is part of life. Our focus should be to serve God and others amidst our sin-cursed difficulty, not on trying to get out of difficulty.

- Gen 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."
- Rom 5:12-14 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned -- (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.
- Rom 8:20-22 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected [it] in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.
- Phil 2:25-27 Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.
- 2 Tim 4:20 Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.

[The prayer of faith that saves the sick in James 5 seems to be related to sickness that comes as a form of punishment as a result of sin. (See James 5:14-15)]

2. *We experience problems because of SIN’S CONSEQUENCES.* [punishment – e.g. smoking → lung cancer]

Sin has consequences. If we disobey God by doing what He commands us not to do, or not doing what He commands to do, we reap what we sow. This could come by natural laws and/or God’s divine punishment.

- Judges 2:10-14 When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from [among] the gods of the people who [were] all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.
- Judges 3:12 And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.
- 1 Cor 10:1-14 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ²all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵But with most of them God was not well pleased, for [their bodies] were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷And do not become idolaters as [were] some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." ⁸Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for

our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God [is] faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear [it.] ¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

- 1 Cor 11:27-30 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks [this] cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many [are] weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

Adam & Eve → Death, Ejection from the Garden

Cain & Abel → Cain cursed further

David & Bathsheba → God forgave David, but the consequences of his sin ravaged his family.

3. We experience problems because of GOD'S DESIRE TO GROW & CHANGE US.

God does things on purpose. He allows hardships, and even schedules them, so that we might grow and change, and know Him better!

- Deut 8:1-4 Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers. And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you [and] test you, to know what [was] in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every [word] that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.
- Deut 8:16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end --
- Judges 3:1-2 Now these [are] the nations which the LORD left, that He might test Israel by them, [that is,] all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan ([this was] only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it)
- Rom 5:3-4 And not only [that,] but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.
- 2 Cor 12:7-10 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
- Heb 10:32-24 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.
- Heb 12:7-11 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected [us,] and we paid [them] respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened [us] as seemed [best] to them, but He for [our] profit, that [we] may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
- James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have [its] perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.
- 1 Pet 1:6-9 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, [being] much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see [Him,] yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith -- the salvation of [your] souls.
- 1 Pet 4:12-13 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

4. We experience problems because of GOD'S DESIRE TO GROW AND CHANGE OTHERS through us.

God desires to use us to change others! Sometimes He does so through our own difficult circumstances, not just when things are pleasant and comfortable for us.

- John 11:1-45 Lazarus was allowed to die for the benefit of others.

Basic Disciplines for Believers

- 2 Cor 1:3-7 Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, [it is] for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, [it is] for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you [is] steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also [you will partake] of the consolation.
- Acts 9:36-42 Dorcas was allowed to die for the benefit of others.
- 1 Pet 2:18-24 Servants, [be] submissive to [your] masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this [is] commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit [is it] if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this [is] commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed [Himself] to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness -- by whose stripes you were healed.
- 1 Pet 3:13-18 And who [is] he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, [you are] blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always [be] ready to [give] a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷ For [it is] better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,
- 1 Pet 4:14-19 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed [are you,] for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if [anyone suffers] as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time [has come] for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if [it begins] with us first, what will [be] the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls [to Him] in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

5. **We experience problems because of GOD'S DESIRE TO DRAW ATTENTION TO HIMSELF.**

God will even allow extended difficulty for the very purpose of pointing to Him! That is called "glorifying" Him!

- John 9:1-3 Now as [Jesus] passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."

6. **We experience problems because of GOD'S SOVEREIGN PLAN.**

Key Thought: God Allows Hurt to Grow Us (Therefore, be praying for God to teach us, not necessarily to get us out of trouble.)

Intro: If God wanted to keep us from hurt and hard circumstances, He could. Yet, He doesn't. God has a purpose in allowing pain.

PART 2: What to Pray for in the Midst of Hard and Hurtful Circumstances:

Instead of praying to get OUT of trouble, we should be praying in our hurt and hard times in at least 3 ways:

- **Pray with an Understanding of Our Sinfulness** – trouble, pain, difficulty, etc. is part of our existence and sin curse – God is with us, but will not remove these things. Praying for healing is OK, but God could have prevented the sickness. Sickness comes with the sin curse, and is just part of life. We should pray for God to be honored in our sickness, rather than praying for God to make us illness-free. We need to get beyond praying "God, get me out of the curse of sin" and start praying, "God, help me to honor you in the midst of a sin-cursed world and with my sin-cursed body."
- **Pray in Confession of Our Sin** – If we are in trouble because of our sins, God's goal is for us to confess (agree with God about) those sins, not to remove us from the consequences of those sins. God's goal is our holiness, not our comfort or convenience. Forgiveness does not mean "release from consequences." Hardship is a gift from God to help us stay on course. (not to be liberated from sin's consequences)
- **Pray in Submission to God's Will** – Remember, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done." We are not to pray for what we want, but for what God wants. That could lead us to die for Christ! Even Jesus prayed, "nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done." Does God want you problem free? NO.