

# HOW TO PRAY

*book six in the series:*

## THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU



**DOUG BRITTON, MFT**

Five-day Bible study for individuals, small groups, and churches

- 
- Day One: What is Prayer?
  - Day Two: When Should You Pray?
  - Day Three: What Should You Pray for?
  - Day Four: Pray with Others
  - Day Five: Review and Test

**How to Pray:** Book six in “The Owner’s Manual to the New You”

**Copyright** © 2020 by Doug Britton

**All rights reserved.** Except as specified below, no portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (including, but not limited to, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, audio recording, and scanning) except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles, without prior written permission from the publisher.

**However, permission is granted to copy this book for personal use** provided it is made available at no charge and it is copied in its entirety, with no changes. This permission may be revoked at any time.

**If this book is copied in quantities of five or more,** please send a brief email describing how it is being used to [owners-manual@dougbrittonbooks.com](mailto:owners-manual@dougbrittonbooks.com).

**Bible translation:** Except when otherwise noted, Scriptures are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version 1984. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

**ISBN:** 978-1-930153-55-4

**Version:** TOM0620191102A

**Published by LifeTree Books,** Sacramento, CA • Visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com)



# The Owner's Manual to the New You

Forty-eight short books

(Each book includes a five-day Bible study and homework)

**By Doug Britton, MFT**

Twelve books on “Knowing God”

Twelve books on “Developing a Godly Character”

Twelve books on “Enjoying Healthy Relationships”

Twelve books on “Overcoming Personal Problems”

*For*

Individuals

Small Groups

Churches

Available free for personal use at:  
[www.dougbrittonbooks.com/owners-manual](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/owners-manual)

# The Owner's Manual to the New You

"The Owner's Manual to the New You," published by LifeTree Books, is a series of forty-eight cross-cultural discipleship books by Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist Doug Britton. LifeTree Books is making these books available free of charge for individual use.

Each book is ideal for a five-day study by small groups, classes, or individuals. Although this is a forty-eight-book series, each book can be studied as a complete book by itself.

## **Knowing God**

- Book 1: Who is God?
- Book 2: Becoming a Believer
- Book 3: Your Identity in Christ
- Book 4: Quick Overview of the Bible
- Book 5: How to Study the Bible
- Book 6: How to Pray
- Book 7: Key Christian Practices
- Book 8: Successful Christian Living
- Book 9: Living a Joyful Life
- Book 10: Knowing God's Will
- Book 11: Obeying God
- Book 12: Living in God's Power

## **Developing a Godly Character**

- Book 13: Growing in Christ
- Book 14: Changing Your Self-Image
- Book 15: Changing Your Attitudes
- Book 16: Living with Humility
- Book 17: Living with Purpose
- Book 18: Living with Self-Control
- Book 19: Living with Integrity
- Book 20: Growing through Problems
- Book 21: Trusting God
- Book 22: Breaking Free from Our Culture
- Book 23: Handling Money Responsibly
- Book 24: Staying Faithful to God

## **Enjoying Healthy Relationships**

- Book 25: Keys to Healthy Relationships
- Book 26: Making Friends
- Book 27: Showing Grace to Others
- Book 28: Forgiving Others
- Book 29: Serving Others
- Book 30: Resolving Conflicts
- Book 31: Overcoming Peer Pressure
- Book 32: Helping Others with Wisdom
- Book 33: Dating, Marriage, and Sex
- Book 34: Embracing the Body of Christ
- Book 35: Respecting Authority
- Book 36: Sharing Your Faith

## **Overcoming Personal Problems**

- Book 37: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 1)
- Book 38: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 2)
- Book 39: Overcoming Rejection
- Book 40: Overcoming Temptation (Part 1)
- Book 41: Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)
- Book 42: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear
- Book 43: Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
- Book 44: Overcoming Self-Sufficiency
- Book 45: Overcoming Guilt and Shame
- Book 46: Overcoming Discouragement
- Book 47: Overcoming Failure
- Book 48: Overcoming the Fear of Death

# Contents

Foreword	7
Small Group Leader's Guidelines	8
Day One: What is Prayer?	9
Homework – Day One	13
Day Two: When Should You Pray?	15
Homework – Day Two	19
Day Three: What Should You Pray for?	21
Homework – Day Three	25
Day Four: Pray with Others	27
Homework – Day Four	31
Day Five: Review and Test (may be removed by leader)	33
About the Author	37
More Books by Doug Britton	38



## Foreword

When I was first asked to write a series of downloadable books for intensive discipleship training, I was excited. Jesus has revolutionized my life, and I am glad to share his truths with you.

The pages you are about to study come straight from God's word. They contain truth that puts our feet on the path to the fullest life possible—truth that sets us free.

As Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

May God speak to your heart as you read, and may he bring his truth alive in your life.

Your brother in Christ,

Doug Britton

P.S. LifeTree Books is offering this downloadable book and all the other books in "The Owner's Manual to the New You" series free of charge. If you find these books helpful, please feel free to spread the news to churches, ministries, and individuals who might benefit from them.

## Small Group Leader's Guidelines

**Introduction.** These studies are for new believers as well as mature Christians. They are for small groups, discipleship classes, mentors, and individuals. They are ideal for studies lasting from sixty to ninety minutes.

**Choose the key points, verses, and discussion questions** you will talk about. Don't think you need to cover every verse and question. With new believers, go over the main points, key verses, and selected questions. Go into more depth with mature Christians.

**Begin and end each study with prayer.** Start by asking God to help each person grow from the study. At the end, ask everyone to pray for help to put God's truth into practice.

**Review homework.** Before starting the current lesson, ask group members to discuss their answers to some of the previous day's homework questions.

**Personalize the lesson.** Although it's okay to read each lesson word-for-word, the material will "come alive" if you discuss some of the key points in your own words. Share your own experiences and struggles, and how God has helped you.

**As you read, identify important points and key parts of verses.** Ask group members to circle them, and then explain why you want to emphasize these points.

**Get everyone involved.** The more people are actively involved, the more they are impacted by what you are studying. Don't ask questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, don't ask, "Do you have any thoughts about this?" Instead, ask, "How does this insight speak to you?"

**Consider breaking up into smaller groups** to discuss the questions if you are leading a large group or class.

**Use day five for a review and test.** Use the questions in day five as a review and/or test. Remove these pages if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

## Want to Learn More?

**Free online resources:** For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups)

**Small group leader's book:** For detailed information on how to lead small groups and overcome typical problems, visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups).

# Day One: What is Prayer?

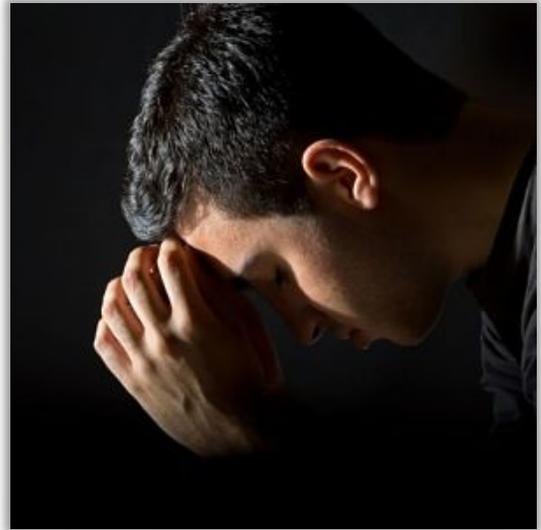
Prayer is not simply saying words as a religious ritual. It is communicating with God.

Prayer is a privilege, an opportunity to communicate with the creator of the universe and the one who loves you the most. Prayer is listening to God. Prayer is worshipping and praising God. Prayer is asking God to bless your friends. And prayer is asking God to bless your enemies.

Prayer is more than asking God for favors (although it's fine to do that, as long as that's not your main focus in prayer). And it's more than simply asking God's blessing on your meals (although that's a good thing to do).

Prayer is much more than following a formula of what to say and how to say it. It is being real with God.

When you pray, don't think you must use fancy, formal words. It is fine to speak simply and sincerely, as to a dear friend or a loving parent.



## Discussion questions

1. What do you think prayer is?
2. What does it mean to say prayer “is being real with God”?
3. What part do you think prayer should play in a believer's life?
4. What part does prayer play in your life?

## Reasons we should pray

When we look in the Bible, we see many reasons we should pray. Here are some important ones:

### The Bible tells us to pray.

*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (Colossians 4:2)*

### Jesus prayed, and we should follow his example.

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35)*

### We are able to walk more closely with God when we communicate with him.

*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)*

### We need God's help.

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being. (Ephesians 3:16)*

**Other people need God's help.**

*And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. (Colossians 4:3)*

**God can perform miracles when we pray.**

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)*

**We can find peace, joy, and comfort as we walk with God.**

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

**Discussion questions**

5. Which of the above verses motivate you to pray?
6. How can you remind yourself of these verses?

**Pray with faith and wisdom****Pray with faith.**

God always answers our prayers, sometimes with amazing miracles, sometimes in unexpected ways, sometimes with different timing than we expected, and sometimes by saying “no.” A key lesson is to trust God no matter what happens.

**Pray in Jesus' name.**

When most Christians pray, we end our prayers by saying “in Jesus' name, amen.” We usually do this because of Jesus' words in John 14:13-14:

*And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. (John 14:13-14)*

What did Jesus mean when he said to ask “in my name”? He wasn't saying if we add a few special words at the end of our prayers we will get anything we pray for. (If you read all the New Testament, you will not find the words “in Jesus' name” at the end of any of the prayers.)

When Jesus said “in my name,” he was referring to praying in agreement with his will.

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. (1 John 5:14-15)*

*When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:3)*

Is it wrong to say the words “in Jesus' name, amen”? Of course not. And it's not wrong to pray if you aren't sure your prayer is according to his will. It doesn't hurt to ask.

However, it's a good idea to pray for wisdom and to know God better so your prayers will line up more closely to his will.

*If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)*

### **Pray, but also do your part.**

There are times when we need to pray and then leave the results in God's hands. Other times, we need to pray but then take action. For example, if a child standing beside you stepped into the street as a bus approached, you would pray, but you wouldn't just stand there and watch to see what happened. You would grab the child's arm and pull him or her to safety.

#### **Discussion questions**

7. Why can we pray with faith?
8. What does it mean to pray "in Jesus' name"?

### **Stay focused when you pray**

If you are like many people, you may have trouble paying attention when you pray. Your mind may drift to problems at work, the grocery list, or problems with friends. Here are some things that can help you concentrate while praying:

- Pray out loud.
- Sing your prayers.
- Write your prayers in a journal.
- Kneel or walk as you pray.
- If you fall asleep when you pray in bed at night, get out of bed and stand up as you pray. You are unlikely to fall asleep while standing up.

#### **Discussion questions**

9. Do you sometimes have trouble staying focused when you pray? Explain your answer.
10. How will the previous ideas help keep you focused?

### **Do you know Jesus?**

This book was written to help believers in Jesus grow in their faith and personal life. You will get the most out of these pages if you know Christ, since it is through his love and power that you can truly change. If you have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to accept him as your Savior and Lord. Make this your personal prayer:

*Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, and I need your help. I confess I have sinned and failed you in many ways. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord, and I ask you to help me follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me, forgiving me, and accepting me as your child.*

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God. God has plans for you—to transform you. You have an exciting life ahead of you!

## Memory verse

*Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (Colossians 4:2)*

## Want to learn more?

### **Books by Doug Britton**

*Getting Started, Getting Connected*

[www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/getting-started](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/getting-started)

*First Things First*

[www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/first-things-first](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/first-things-first)





## Day Two: When Should You Pray?

The Bible doesn't give us a rule about when to pray or how long to pray. Instead, it simply says to pray throughout the day. Paul summed this up when he wrote, "Pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Today we will look at practical ways to make prayer part of our daily life.

### **Establish a regular time to pray every day**

It's easy to forget to pray. It's also easy to think we are "too busy" to pray.

You can overcome these excuses by setting aside a specific time to pray each day—perhaps combining this with your daily Bible study.

Establishing a prayer habit is similar to beginning an exercise program. The benefits of both prayer and exercise might seem small at first, but they build up over time. If you persist in prayer, you become more Christ-like, just as if you persist in lifting weights, you become stronger.



### **Start small.**

If you don't have a habit of praying, start out small. For example, spend a few minutes praying when you wake up in the morning or after you read the Bible. Make this a regular habit.

### **Decide when you will pray.**

Many people find that praying in the morning helps them walk close to God as they go through the day.

### **Decide where you will pray.**

You can pray anywhere. However, if you are able to find a quiet place away from distractions, you can concentrate more easily as you pray

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35)*

### **Consider adding more regular prayer times**

As time goes on, gradually make your time longer and perhaps add some more regular times. For example, you might decide upon something like the following three-times-a-day routine.

### **Morning prayer**

You could combine this prayer time with your daily Bible study. You could pray for your daily activities and for other people's specific needs. You could also pray to love God more and to show his love to everyone you come into contact with.

**After-work prayer**

As we go through life, we are exposed to ungodly influences that can cling to us much as dust does when we walk along a dirt trail. You could pray for God to cleanse you from this pollution. You could also pray for God's help to overcome personal temptations such as watching TV for hours, yelling at the kids, spending too much time on the computer, getting drunk, or staying up too late.

**Bedtime prayer**

You could pray for God's protection over yourself, your family, and your friends.

**Pray before meals**

Make it a habit to give thanks and ask for God's blessing before eating.

**Discussion questions**

1. How will you build daily prayer into your life?
2. How will you remind yourself to pray?

**Pray throughout the day**

When we read the New Testament, we see that the believers prayed throughout the day, not just once or twice a day. For example, in Paul's letters he wrote that he constantly prayed for the people to whom he was writing.

*God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. (Romans 1:9-10)*

*We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 1:3)*

*I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. (2 Timothy 1:3)*

How often should we pray? In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul said to pray "continually."

That doesn't mean you can never think or talk since you are praying. But it does mean you can train yourself to pray more and more as you go through the day. You can pray for others. You can ask God for advice. You can thank him for his love. You can thank him for his help.

As you grow closer to Jesus, you will probably discover there are many times during the day when your mind is drifting aimlessly, or you are entertaining unhealthy thoughts. Learning to pray throughout the day can help you stay focused, know God more intimately, and live a more fulfilling life.

Not only that, when you pray throughout the day, you are better able to handle the problems that inevitably come up in life. Instead of reacting with frustration or anger, you will have developed the habit of saying a quick prayer before speaking.

**Discussion questions**

3. How often do you pray during the day? What do you normally pray for?

4. Why is it difficult for most of us to pray throughout the day?
5. Pray silently for someone for two minutes. Pray for his or her walk with God, happiness, success, health, protection from harm, peace, and growth in areas of weakness.
6. What did it feel like to pray for this person?
7. How do you think you can go about increasing the amount of time you pray throughout the day?

## **Worship and praise God throughout the day**

Praising and worshipping God when you are alone as well as when you are with other Christians is a powerful way to connect with your maker, a way to allow his Spirit to move in you and transform you. It's also a great way to reconnect with God when you start to drift away in your daily life.

*I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good. I will praise you in the presence of your saints. (Psalm 52:9)*

*Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. (Psalm 100:2)*

When you worship God, you bring joy to him. If you have children or grandchildren, you may have experienced a taste of what this is like when they said they loved you.

God is our heavenly father, and he enjoys our love and worship. Not only that, he is much more worthy of it than we are of our children's love.

One word of warning: Be sensitive to those around you. Don't sing when it would cause an offense.

### **Discussion questions**

8. How often do you sing worship or praise choruses as you go through the day? How comfortable are you at these times?
9. Do you feel self-conscious because you don't think you have a good singing voice? If so, how important do you think that is to God?

## **Make prayer your first response to problems**

Although praying is often the most helpful thing we can do, it is often the last thing we think of. Sometimes we need to talk less and pray more.

### **Discussion questions**

10. Why do we find it easy to criticize or give advice but difficult to pray?
11. How can you remind yourself to pray when problems come up?

## **Overcome your excuses for not praying**

The following are common excuses people have for not praying. Each is followed by a brief answer.

**“I forget to pray.”**

Make a prayer chart and tape it to your bedroom door or some other visible place. At the end of each day, check each time you prayed. Also write the reasons for times you did not pray and your plans to improve.

**“I don't have time to pray.”**

When you say, “I'm too busy,” you are really saying prayer is a low priority. If you make prayer a priority, you can find time.

For example, if you think you are too busy to pray before going to work in the morning, you could make time by going to bed earlier, then getting up a little earlier. Or you could watch TV a few minutes less.

**“I'm too angry to pray.”**

When you are mad, you really need to pray. The first thing to pray about is your anger.

**“My children want my attention.”**

One of the greatest gifts you can give your children is the example of someone who prays. Train them to read or play independently as you pray for a few minutes. Also invite them to pray with you.

**Discussion questions**

12. What have been your excuses for not praying when you should have prayed?
13. What will help you pray more regularly?

**Memory verse**

*Pray continually. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)*

## Homework – Day Two

1. Do you have a regular daily prayer time?

If so, when is it? How many minutes do you pray on average?

If not—or if you are not consistent—when would be a good time?

Is this something you will work on putting into practice?

How will you put it into practice?

2. How important was praying throughout the day to the early Christians?

3. Why do you think this was so important to them?

4. How many minutes a day do you pray as you go through the day?

If you think you should pray more often during the day, write a brief prayer asking God to help you start doing so today:

5. Describe your experience, if any, of praising and worshipping God as you go through the day:

6. If you sometimes neglect to pray when you know you should, what are your main excuses?

7. What do you think God would say about these excuses?

8. What steps will you take to overcome these excuses?

## Day Three: What Should You Pray for?

There are countless things we can pray about. Today you will read several suggestions about how to (1) pray to love God more, (2) pray for other people, (3) pray for yourself, and (4) pray Scripture prayers.

### Pray to love God

Jesus put all the Bible's commandments into perspective when someone asked him: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Matthew 22:36).

*Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40)*



Loving God is the most important commandment, yet most of us have trouble loving him as much as we should. Since this is so important, it's a good idea to ask God to help us love him more.

I'd like to invite you to join me in asking God to help us put these commands into practice. As you read the following prayer, make it your own prayer.

*Father God, thank you for loving me, thank you for giving me eternal life, and thank you for the many good things in my life. Jesus said the most important commandment is to love you with all my heart, soul, and mind. But as I go through the day, I take you for granted, and I often don't think about you at all. Please help me love you more. Help me remember that you are with me throughout the day, and help me stay more aware of you. Thank you that I can come to you honestly like this. I bless you and praise you in Jesus' name.*

### Discussion questions

1. What did it feel like as you prayed that prayer?
2. What do you think about making this a regular part of your prayers?

### Pray for others (and to love others)

God wants us to have a passionate concern for others' welfare (1 Corinthians 12:25-26). One way to show this concern is through prayer. In fact, the Bible says that when we don't pray for others, we are sinning.

*As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. (1 Samuel 12:23)*

Whom should we pray for? The answer is pretty simple—everyone.

*I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. (1 Timothy 2:1)*

### **Pray for fellow believers.**

*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 saints. (Ephesians 6:18)*

*We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. (1 Thessalonians 1:2)*

### **Pray for unbelievers.**

*Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. (Romans 10:1)*

### **Pray for your enemies.**

*But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:44-45)*

### **Pray for governmental authorities.**

*I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)*

### **Discussion questions**

3. How often do you pray for others?
4. What types of things do you pray for?

## **How should we pray for others?**

There's no limit to what we can pray for. Here are some examples from the Bible to help you identify prayer projects.

### **Pray others will be delivered from difficulties.**

*Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. (Acts 12:5)*

### **Pray others will be rescued from adversaries.**

*And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. (2 Thessalonians 3:2)*

### **Pray for others to be saved.**

*Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. (Romans 10:1)*

### **Pray for others to know God's power.**

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called*

*you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. (Ephesians 1:17-19)*

**Pray for others to deeply understand God's love.**

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16-19)*

**Pray for others to love wisely.**

*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11)*

**Pray for others to know God's will.**

*For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. (Colossians 1:9)*

**Pray for others to have open doors to talk about Jesus.**

*And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. (Colossians 4:3)*

**Pray for others to speak well when telling others about Jesus' love.**

*Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. (Colossians 4:4)*

**Pray for others' health and welfare.**

*Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. (3 John 1:2)*

**Discussion questions**

5. How important is it for us to pray for others? Explain your answer.
6. Do you need to pray any of the prayers you just read about more often? If so, how will you build this into your daily life?
7. Let's practice praying for others now. (The leader can start, praying out loud, then each member of the group can pray for one or two people.)

**Pray for yourself**

Although we should pray for others, it's also good to devote some time to personal prayers. Here are some examples to help you get started:

- Ask God to forgive you for any unconfessed sins.

- Tell God that you forgive others for ways they hurt you.
- Ask God to help you love him more.
- Pray to keep godly priorities.
- Ask God to help you love others more.
- Pray for strength over temptation.
- Thank God for his love.
- Pray for protection.

In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus gave us a model prayer (often called the “Lord’s prayer”). You can say the actual words as a prayer.

*This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:9-13)*

In addition to simply praying these actual words, you can take the main points of the prayer and personalize them. For example, when you read “your kingdom come,” you could pray about issues you are facing, surrendering yourself and the outcome to God.

#### **Discussion questions**

8. What are the key points in the “Lord’s prayer”?
9. How can you incorporate these points into your own prayers?

### **Pray scripture prayers**

One powerful way to pray is to say the actual words of verses that apply to a situation you are facing. For example, if you are experiencing anxiety, you could borrow the words in Philippians 4:6-7 and 1 Peter 5:7 as you pray, asking God to help you put them into practice.

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

### **Memory verse**

*I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. (1 Timothy 2:1)*

## Homework – Day Three

1. Why is it important to pray for other people?

2. How often do you pray for others?

What types do you ask for when you pray for others?

3. What should you ask God for when you pray for your enemies?

4. Imagine praying for someone who needs to know God's power. Write out a prayer (using Scripture) you could say for this person:

5. Imagine praying for someone who needs to experience God's love. Write a prayer (using Scripture) you could say for this person:

6. What are the four key things you need to pray for in your own life?

a.

b.

c.

d.

7. How can you use the "Lord's prayer" in your own prayer life?

## Day Four: Pray with Others

Some people have trouble with the idea of praying with others because they think Jesus said we should only pray privately. Here's the passage they usually quote:

*And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6:5-6)*

It may look like Jesus was saying the only time we can pray is when we are alone in a room, but that wasn't his point. His point was that some people pray in front of other people to show off, trying to sound super-spiritual. He was criticizing their self-righteousness.



Read the first five verses of Matthew 6 to better understand what Jesus was getting at. You can see he was saying to pray sincerely, not to show off.

One reason we can be sure it's okay to pray publicly (with the right attitude) is that Jesus himself prayed publicly. For example, he prayed over the food when he was in the middle of a crowd.

*Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. (Matthew 15:36)*

He also gave thanks for the bread and cup during the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:22-24) and said a long public prayer that takes up all of Chapter 17 in the gospel of John.

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus' disciples followed his example and prayed publicly. For example, we read that:

- Jesus' followers joined together constantly in prayer (Acts 1:14).
- Jesus' followers prayed out loud as a group, glorifying God and asking for boldness and miracles (Acts 4:29-30).
- Stephen prayed out loud for his murderers as they were killing him (Acts 7:59-60).
- After Paul said a final goodbye to the believers in Ephesus, he knelt down and prayed with them (Acts 20:36).

### Discussion questions

1. Read Matthew 6:5-6. What do you think Jesus was getting at?
2. What did Jesus mean by saying the hypocrites "received their reward in full"?

## **Watch your attitude when you pray publicly**

It's easy for us to criticize the hypocrites Jesus was correcting, but if we are honest with ourselves, sometimes many of us have tried to impress others with the way we pray. It's easy to slip into this trap—even for pastors.

### **Discussion questions**

3. Have you ever caught yourself trying to impress people by the way you prayed? If so, what was one time?
4. How can you avoid slipping into praying this way?

## **Make praying with others part of your daily life**

There are many times in life when it is good to pray with others. Of course, you don't want to be pushy, but you might be surprised at how often people appreciate it if you ask if they would like to pray with you. For example:

### **Pray about decisions.**

When you talk with a fellow believer about plans to help with a ministry, whether or not to start a business, whom to invite to a party, or any other decision, take a moment to ask God's guidance.

### **Pray about problems.**

If you and someone else are having difficulties, it may be a good idea to suggest praying about the situation. Be sensitive in your timing. If the other person is screaming and you suggest praying, you risk seeming "holier than thou," and the screaming may get louder.

### **Pray with a prayer partner.**

Invite someone to pray with you regularly. When you pray, ask God to help each other grow closer to Jesus and to help each of you in your daily lives.

Along the same lines, if you and a friend are both struggling with temptation, anger, depression, or other issues, you could get together once a week to pray for each other.

If you are a parent and both you and one of your children has an anger problem, you could ask your child if he or she would like to pray together. Your child could pray for you, and you could pray for him or her. This could become a daily routine.

### **Thank God.**

When you and a friend are talking and either of you says something about how God helped you, take a moment to thank God.

### **Pray together after spending time with a friend.**

If you and a friend spend time together, take a minute to pray for one another at the end of your time together.

### **Pray with your spouse.**

If you are married, ask your spouse if he or she would like to pray together every day. You could pray at any time that is convenient for both of you.

**Discussion questions**

5. How could you put some of these ideas into practice?
6. Take a minute to ask someone in your group if he or she would like you to pray for anything. Also share your own prayer request(s) with that person.

**You can do it**

Some people feel awkward or embarrassed about praying out loud when others are present. For many, the idea is terrifying. They fear they will sound stupid. They have heard others pray eloquent, seemingly powerful prayers, and they do not think their prayers could measure up.

If you think your prayers sound dumb, remember that prayer simply is talking with God. It doesn't matter how many fancy words you use. What matters is how sincere you are. Remind yourself that God is right there with you, and that he loves you.

Ask God to help you overcome your fear and embarrassment. Also ask him to give you a sense of joy that you are praying with others.

*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." (Romans 8:15)*

**Discussion questions**

7. Do you feel uncomfortable praying out loud with others? If so, why?
8. How can you become more comfortable praying with others?

**Memory verse**

*If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them. (Matthew 18:19-20)*

**Want to learn more?****Free online Bible studies**

*Pray with Your Husband or Wife Every Day*

[www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/pray-with-spouse](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/pray-with-spouse)

*Keep a Couple's Prayer Chart*

[www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/marriage-prayer-chart](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/marriage-prayer-chart)

## Notes

## Homework – Day Four

1. What did Jesus mean when he said to go into your room and close the door when you pray (Matthew 6:5-6)?

2. Describe a time Jesus or one of his followers prayed publicly:

What can you learn from this?

3. Have you ever tried to impress others by praying loudly, eloquently, or fervently?

If so describe one time you did this:

What can you learn from this experience?

4. Describe how comfortable or uncomfortable you are about praying publicly:

If you have been uncomfortable, what points in today's lesson will help you overcome this?

5. Review the ideas in today's lesson for ways you could make praying for others part of your personal life.

What is one idea that you will put into practice this week?

Who will you do this with?

When will you do it?

After you do it, write what you did and how it worked:

6. When you pray with others, do you do most of the praying, very little praying, or about the same as everyone else?

Should you pray less, pray more, or pray about the same amount as you currently do?





## Day Five: Answer Key to Test (may be removed by leader)

### Note to teachers and small group leaders

Remove this page if you do not want group members to see these answers ahead of time.

### True or false

- T 1. Praying is communicating with God.
- F 2. If we say the right words, it doesn't matter whether or not we are focusing on what we are saying.
- F 3. We should not pray publicly because Jesus said not to do that.
- F 4. Jesus doesn't actually want us to pray for our enemies.
- F 5. God understands that we are busy, so he doesn't expect us to pray very much.
- T 6. Prayer is a privilege. We shouldn't take it for granted.
- T 7. Worship and praise are a type of prayer.
- F 8. We can count on God to give us anything we want.
- T 9. It's important to pray for others.
- T 10. God answers prayer.

### Memory verses

- 1. Colossians 4:2  
*Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*
  
- 2. 1 Thessalonians 5:17  
*Pray continually.*



## About the Author

Doug Britton, Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist, has helped hundreds of thousands of people as a therapist, clinical director of a treatment center, seminar speaker, radio co-host, and author of over twenty books that show people how to apply God's truths in their daily lives.

He has also trained pastors, counselors, mentors, and lay leaders in biblical counseling, mentoring, and small group leadership.

Doug and his wife Skeeter live in Northern California.



### Books

Doug has written Bible-based books on many daily-living topics. Visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore).

### Free online Bible studies for daily living

Read and download Doug's free online studies on marriage, parenting, anger, self-concept, anxiety, depression, temptation, fear of death, biblical counseling, mentoring, small group leadership, and other topics. Visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources).

### Seminars and retreats

Doug is the founder and president of LifeTree Institute and LifeTree Books. If you would like him or another member of the LifeTree team to speak in your church on any of the above topics, please visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com) and click on the "Seminars" link.

### We would love to hear from you

Was this book helpful? Do you have suggestions to make it better?

Tell us your thoughts by emailing [owners-manual@dougbrittonbooks.com](mailto:owners-manual@dougbrittonbooks.com)  
(Be sure to mention the name of this book and what country you live in.)

## More Books by Doug Britton

In addition to “The Owner’s Manual to the New You,” Doug Britton has written many more cross-cultural, Bible-based books on leadership, discipleship, and key areas of daily living.

### **Growing in Christ**

Getting Started, Getting Connected  
First Things First  
Living by Grace

### **Living Free**

Breaking Free (from Drugs and Alcohol)  
Conquering Depression  
Defeating Temptation  
Healing Life’s Hurts  
Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity  
Six Keys to Personal Growth  
Six Keys to Successful Relationships  
Strengthening Your Marriage  
Victory over Grumpiness, Irritation, & Anger  
Who Do You Think You Are?

### **Marriage by the Book**

Laying a Solid Foundation  
Making Christ the Cornerstone  
Encouraging Your Spouse  
Extending Grace to Your Mate  
Talking with Respect and Love  
Improving Your Teamwork  
Putting Money in its Place  
Celebrating Intimacy and Romance

### **Successful Christian Parenting**

Parenting Foundations  
Preparing Your Child for Life

### **Christian Leadership**

How to Lead a Christ-Centered Small Group

To see the current list of books, visit [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore).

## Spread the Word

**Sign up for Doug Britton’s email newsletter** to learn about his new books, online Bible studies, and upcoming seminars and retreats. Sign up at [www.dougbrittonbooks.com/newsletter](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com/newsletter).

**Do you have a website or social media page?** Give visitors access to free practical, Bible-based resources by linking to [www.dougbrittonbooks.com](http://www.dougbrittonbooks.com).