

## Prayer

***“Sing praises to God, sing praises;  
sing praises to our King, sing praises.***

***For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise.”***

***Psalm 47:6-7***

This study was written by Marilyn Miller, a staff minister at Abiding Word Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas. It was reviewed for theological content by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor-emeritus Armin Panning.

The study is designed to be used in conjunction with reading the book *Prayer: An Audience with the King* by Joel V. Petermann, part of the People's Bible Teachings Series. The book is available through NPH. Each of the six lessons should take 60-90 minutes, depending upon the amount of discussion.

# Prayer

Based on *Prayer: An Audience with the King* by Joel V. Petermann

Part of the People's Bible Teachings Series

## Leader's Guide

### Chapter 1: The King—The One to Whom We Pray

### Chapter 2: The Subjects—Those Seeking an Audience

## Opening prayer

1. What images come to mind when we hear the word “king”? Who are some of the rulers that form and influence our idea of a king?

*King David with all his power, King Solomon and his many wives and riches used to build the temple and much more, King Xerxes with the way he treated his wife Vashti and the fear that Esther had for him, maybe the kings of England or France from history class and various movies. They all wielded great power in their kingdom, were surrounded by people who instantly did their bidding, instilled fear in their friends and enemies alike, and seemed to enjoy the best the world had to offer when it came to food, palaces, women, wine, and other material luxuries.*

2. Psalm 47:6-7 says “Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise.” Based on what we know from Scripture, from life, and what is discussed on page 12-16, fill in the following comparisons between an earthly king and our KING, the one to whom we pray.

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Earthly king</b>	<b>Our Lord and King</b>
Size of kingdom	<i>A relatively small geographic area, with boundaries changing as time passes</i>	<i>The entire earth plus the heavenly realms—everything that is, was, or will exist</i>
Length of reign	<i>A few years or maybe a few decades</i>	<i>Forever, for all time, before creation and after this earth comes to an end. He is eternal.</i>
Superiority	<i>Always someone greater or trying to dethrone; limited by circumstances of the times or pressures from other earthly powers</i>	<i>Number One, always and forever, so brilliant no one can approach him. Even nature and the laws of science bow to him</i>
Power	<i>Limited to what he can do or what people allow him to do; limited by size, finances, imagination...</i>	<i>Created a flawless universe with only his words and therefore has control over all even the laws of nature (Red Sea, calming the storm). He purposely keeps the world in action willing each breath, each drop of rain, each law of science to continue. He is more powerful than we can even fathom.</i>
Justice	<i>Punishes insubordination and lawlessness subject to his knowledge, emotions, personality, whims, and abilities. Sometimes punishes the innocent and lets the guilty go free</i>	<i>Displays righteous anger at rebellion or lack of honor and responds with exactly what is deserved (Flood, Tower of Babel, Sodom &amp; Gomorrah). Nothing is hidden from him.</i>
Compassion	<i>Based on his emotions, personality, whims, ability. Easily shows favoritism.</i>	<i>Ex 34:6-7: Shows mercy, slow to anger, abounding in love. Graciously gave us our Savior knowing we can't reconcile with him on our own. Forgives. Extends a helping hand. Gives us spiritual peace.</i>

“This, then, is the one to whom we pray. Since he is the Maker and Creator of everything and everyone, he is King of everything and everyone. To understand and know him is critical if we are going to pray to him. What we know about him will affect our prayers to him” (pg. 16).

3. What do we learn about approaching an earthly king from Nehemiah going before King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 1:11), from Queen Esther seeking an audience with her husband King Xerxes (Esther 4:11,16), and from Queen Bathsheba and Nathan going before King David (1 Kings 1:15-16,22-23)?

*Everyone, regardless of position or relationship with the king, must show reverence and only speak when invited. There are no exceptions even for wives, officials, or most trusted servants.*

4. According to Psalm 14:1-3, and repeated in Romans 3:10-18, what status do we have before the King?

*We are rebels who deserve nothing but wrath and fury! We are disgusting!*

5. From Proverbs 20:2 what should we expect from our King?

*Death! We are persona non grata. We can't even hope to enter the King's presence, say nothing about presenting a request. Sin builds a barrier to our audience with the King (pg 21).*

6. Read Proverbs 1:20-33 found on page 22 as Wisdom, a personification of the Lord's will and ways, speaks to the simple ones, all those who are morally bankrupt. From this passage what do we learn about our ability to obtain an audience with our King?

*There's heartache as Wisdom sees the sinners repeatedly violate the rules of the kingdom. There's a longing to reach out to these people and repair the relationship so they can come back together, but the people refuse even when rebuked. When problems come, then they want to beg the King for help, but he won't acknowledge them because they remain unrepentant. The King knows they aren't willing to turn from their evil ways and give him the honor he is due, so he allows their sins to destroy them. We can't hide our true motives and loyalty from our all-knowing God.*

7. Do we learn anything new from Isaiah 1:15-18?

*God refuses to listen to those who live in sin, but when sinners turn from their evil ways, forgiveness removes the barrier, and we are invited into his presence.*

8. What is the message in Zechariah 7:13?

*The Lord desires to be in harmony with his people but they refuse.*

The same message is repeated in James 4:3. The author summarizes the situation well when he states: "They do not cry out as subjects, but as self-serving rebels who see prayer as a means for personal benefit. This is something the King detests" (pg 25).

9. How will the renewed knowledge of this barrier between you and your King make a difference in your life?

This is the hard law under which we sometimes choose to live, never paying too much attention to the consequence of our unrepentant sin. But we know we do have an audience with the King through our Savior, Jesus Christ. More on this next week.

**For next week read chapters 3 and 4. Also read through Psalm 51 several times, a great Psalm of repentance.**

## **Closing prayer**

Ask God to let us heed his call, to purify our hearts and minds, to forgive our sins, and to allow us into his presence.

*If you need a copy of the book, order it from [NPH.net](http://NPH.net) or call 1-800-662-6022.*

# Prayer

Based on *Prayer: An Audience with the King* by Joel V. Petermann

Part of the *People's Bible Teachings Series*

## Leader's Guide

### Chapter 3: An Audience—The Right to Speak and Be Heard

### Chapter 4; The Father—King Speaks First!

## Opening prayer

Last week we learned that we are rebels and the King's anger burns against us. Somehow there must be reconciliation; the King must desire to allow the rebels into his presence. "They cannot reconcile themselves to the King. He must reconcile them to himself. He must first put away his burning anger. He must lay aside his sentence of condemnation and treat them other than as rebels who deserve to die under the laws of the kingdom. Who would approach a tyrant? Who would approach a vengeful king who offers no hope of reconciliation? Isn't it the hope of kindness and mercy that brings subjects before a mighty monarch, even if they have wronged him?" (pg 27-28).

10. Read John 8:29, Hebrews 5:7, Matthew 3:17 and Matthew 17:5. Who is the only person readily given an audience with the King and why?

*Jesus is the only subject of the kingdom who has the inherent right to approach the King because he always pleases the King. He didn't rebel. During his days on earth, Jesus totally and completely submitted to the will of the Father-King, living a perfect life.*

11. Read John 3:36 and Romans 3:23-26. What do these words mean:

- justified

*Declared not guilty, as in a court of law.*

- grace?

*Undeserved gift, not earned in any way*

- redemption?

*The price/ransom was paid, to free from the consequences.*

- atonement?

*Made at one, the penalty for wrath is taken away.*

12. Put these passages into your own words to explain what this means for us, the rebels.

*Jesus endured God's full wrath in our place. The King's wrath has been appeased and we are now reconciled, at peace, with the King. We couldn't even begin to bridge the chasm between ourselves and the King and were totally dependent upon Jesus as our Savior. God even gives us the faith to accept and believe this!*

13. Read Romans 5:9-10. Does this passage add anything to what we've just said?

*Certainly, since the difficult part is completed—we were enemies but no longer, God's Son hung dead on the cross, but no more—we can now rejoice in this new life. Christ continues to live for us and continually intercedes for us.*

14. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 says, "All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." What impact does this reconciliation have on our prayers?

*The King gives us an audience and hears what we have to say! He looks on us with favor rather than with wrath.*

15. From 2 Chronicles 7:13-16, how does impenitence affect our prayers?

*Impenitence turns us back into rebels and persona non grata before the King. The work of reconciliation has been completed, but we have rejected it and it does us no good!*

16. What is repentance?

*Repentance is sorrow over our sin, combined with faith in God's gracious promise of forgiveness because of Jesus, and the sincere desire to turn away from that sin. As we receive God's forgiveness in Christ, we are enabled to turn our lives around, to desire to obey God's commandments (the rules of the kingdom), and to praise and worship our King. We thank God for the grace that works this miracle in our lives.*

17. Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father in heaven...". How did "the King" become "our Father"?

This is a whole different relationship. With the completion of Jesus' work and the faith that has been put into our hearts, is he now "our Father" or still "our King"?

*Because of the work of Christ, we are told we have been made heirs, legitimate children of God. He is still the almighty King, but we have been invited into the intimacy of his family and have been invited to see him as a dear father. Calling him Father shows that we are dear to him, that we know he will provide for all our needs and that he longs to have us close to him. Recognizing him as our King shows that we acknowledge his power and majesty, that we give him the honor he is due.*

18. We know it is proper etiquette, when in the presence of a superior, out of respect we do not speak until spoken to. Has God invited us to speak? (Ps 50:15)

*Yes! He has told us to come to him and lay all our worries at his feet.*

19. When approaching an earthly king, we must first listen to what he has to say before speaking. How and when do we hear what our King has to say? (Hebrews 1:1-2)

*In Old Testament times he spoke through prophets but now he speaks to us directly through his Son, through his Word (John 1:1,14). Jesus often said his words came directly from the Father, and Jesus taught his disciples, who in turn wrote these things down with the inspiration of the Spirit so that we can read and learn them. We hear what our King has to say through the Bible. We are told the Bible is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). This happens in worship services, in organized or family Bible study, in personal reading and meditation.*

20. The author makes the statement "Reading the Bible keeps our prayers fresh" (pg 47). Do you agree? Why? You might want to consider John 15:7 in your answer.



*Jesus tells us if his words remain in us, if they find a home in our heart, then he will answer our prayers! If we haven't talked to someone in a very long time, isn't it harder to carry on a meaningful conversation than if we can just pick up where we left off yesterday? Our relationship is so much more intimate when we communicate frequently, when we know what is important to the person we are speaking to. This is the same with our communication with our King.*

21. How will this discussion about listening before speaking and repentance make a difference in your prayer life?

22. How will meditating on the great gospel message of reconciliation make a difference in your prayer life?

**For next week read chapters 5 and 6. Also if it isn't already a regular part of your life, begin reading your Bible every day. Read your Bible before you pray and see if it makes a difference in your prayers.**

## **Closing prayer**

Ask God to forgive our sins, thank him for his abundant grace, and ask him to help us hear and understand his message.

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## Leader's Guide

### Chapter 5: We Speak to the King

### Chapter 6: We Bring Our Requests to the King

## Opening prayer

The first week we learned that we are rebels and the King's anger burns against us; our sins build a barrier between us and the King. Last week we learned about the great reconciliation that is ours because of the work of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. He removes the barrier, and the King speaks to us through the Bible, inviting us to come into his presence. This week, we will talk about how we speak to the King.

23. What are some of the ways in which you pray?

*Formal/corporate prayer in church, at Bible class, in meetings with the family; a tear, a smile or a sigh of relief as we meditate on his grace and gifts of forgiveness and love; an outburst of praise as we see his preservation and deliverance; a quick plea for help or protection; a quiet time when we wordlessly bring our thanksgiving and petitions before him; our thoughts verbalized when alone or with a few others... Our prayers take many forms, and we know that God hears them all.*

24. What are some of the different types of prayer?

- Ps 98:1, 4

*Pure praise*

- Ps 136:1, Matt 14:19

*Thanksgiving*

- Ps 32:3-6

*Confession of sins*

- 1 Sam 1:11

*Requests*

- Exodus 32:31-32, Luke 23:34

*Intercessions for others*

Do your prayers include all of these?

25. The author says prayer always seeks divine favor (pg 61). Reflect and comment on this statement.

*As with an earthly king, we are not allowed to just walk in and begin talking. We discussed this last week. It is only through his divine favor that he allows us to come into his presence, based on the redemptive work of Christ. Once we are in his presence, we may bring our messages. Obviously we are also seeking divine favor when making a confession, request or intercession. But even when bringing prayers of praise and thanksgiving we can only say these things because God allows us to say them. Bottom of page 63 says "For without Jesus it is futile to seek divine favor. Only because of and through Jesus Christ and his merits does the Lord ever look favorably upon sinners. So every prayer that we pray must begin with the realization of our unworthiness to pray. At the same time, our hearts and souls must grasp the wonderful message of the gospel. For Jesus' sake God shows us undeserved love (grace) and therefore gladly hears and answers our prayers. He does show us favor."*

26. Martin Luther says in his discussion of the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer: "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. *What does this mean?* We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins or because of them deny our prayers; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we ask, neither have we deserved them, but we ask that he would give them all to us by grace; for we daily

sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment.” What impact does unforgiven sin have on our prayer? Why?

*Sin creates a barrier between us and God so there can be no prayer. If we aren't repentant, if we don't respect God's laws and wish to live a life pleasing to him, if we reject the work of our Savior, then we have built a barrier between ourselves and God. God knows our hearts and mind and does not hear or answer the prayers of an unrepentant sinner. Even though we daily sin much, the prayers of a repentant sinner are prayers of faith, trusting that God will not look upon our sin but rather see us as he sees his Son, our Savior. What a blessing we have when we confess our sins at the beginning of our worship service, followed by God's announcement of forgiveness, opening the way for true worship to take place.*

27. Read Hebrews 11:6, Psalm 32:6 and Psalm 145:18. Can an unbeliever pray? Justify your answer.

*An unbeliever's sin creates a barrier between him and God. Prayer is always connected to faith in Jesus. Anyone who rejects God, who doesn't believe he exists, who doesn't look to Jesus as his Savior and the reason for God's favor, is not given an audience with the King. The prayer of an unbeliever is no more than words because God doesn't hear or accept it.*

As repentant believers we take to heart Luther's comment "A Christian without prayer is just as impossible as a living person without a pulse." The author adds (page 68) "We cannot live like Christians and do what Christians do until we are Christians. Once a person becomes a Christian by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, however, at that very same moment that person begins to act like a Christian. That includes the heartfelt desire to pray."

28. When we pray for ourselves, what are some of the things that we take to God in prayer?

- Luke 11:13

*Our primary request would be for spiritual blessings, for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. This is the best and most important gift that our God can give us.*

- James 5:13a

*We pray for our personal protection and self-preservation, for help in time of trouble.*

- Luke 22:46

*We pray that we would not fall into temptation, that we would not fall prey to Satan's attacks but that our faith will be sustained.*

- Acts 8:22

*We pray for forgiveness.*

- Philippians 4:6

*We joyfully and thankfully come to God for anything and everything.*

29. The Bible not only tells us to pray for ourselves, but it also teaches us to pray for others. For whom do we pray?

- 1 Timothy 2:1-2

*Our government and officials, that our lives may be peaceful and quiet so that we can proclaim the gospel.*

- Acts 26:29

*For unbelievers, that they may come to faith.*

- Romans 15:30-31

*For our fellow believers, especially those proclaiming the gospel, in their struggles and for their success.*

- Luke 22:32

*For our fellow believers, that they may withstand Satan.*

- James 5:14

*Ask others to pray for us in our time of need.*

- Matthew 5:44

*For our enemies, prayed from a forgiving heart, much as Jesus asked God to forgive the soldiers as they nailed him to the cross*

- Matthew 19:13a

*For children—for their protection, that their faith would grow, that they will be saved*

- For whom do we not pray? (Hebrews 9:27)

*For the dead, as some religions erroneously teach*

30. Sometimes we feel inadequate in our prayers, or our faith is weak, or we don't even know what to pray for. Based on Romans 8:26, should this concern us?

*No. God has seen our need and has provided an advocate, the Holy Spirit, who prays for us and aligns our prayers with his gracious will. What a wonderful blessing to know our weak "help!" comes to God with just what we need most. Through the Holy Spirit, God answers our stumbling, clumsy prayer with as much love and urgency as a perfectly worded masterpiece. "The Father-King... has put at our disposal an advocate who can take our faltering words and wing them with power to ascend to the heavenly throne." (pg 78)*

31. How do we take advantage of this work of the Holy Spirit?

*The Spirit works through the Word (and the sacraments,) and his power is unleashed in our lives when we study and meditate on the Word. It is through being in the Word that "the Holy Spirit takes possession of our intellect, our emotions, and our will and brings them into harmony with those of ... the Father-King." (pg 79)*

32. How will our discussion today—the different types of prayers, what we are to pray for, those for whom we are to pray, the impact of unrepentant sin on our prayers, and the role of the Holy Spirit in our prayers—make a difference in your prayer life?

**For next week read chapters 7 and 8. Also if it isn't already a regular part of your life, begin reading your Bible every day. Read your Bible before you pray and see if it makes a difference in your prayers.**

## **Closing prayer**

"The prayer of a righteous man (person) is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

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## Leader's Guide

### Chapter 7: Common Courtesy—The Etiquette of Prayer

### Chapter 8: More Etiquette: Language and Location

## Opening prayer

The way we speak to others says something about our understanding of our relationship to them. Today we will discuss the words we choose, our posture, what we do with our hands, and where we choose to pray.

33. In what posture do you usually find yourself when saying your private prayers? Where do you usually pray?

*Sitting at desk/in comfortable chair, kneeling, lying down before going to sleep or upon waking, standing. In the kitchen, bedroom, working in the yard ...*

34. Do you find these physical things make a difference in your ability to pray or the quality of your prayers?

35. The Bible doesn't say there is a preferred posture but gives us examples of several.

- Kneeling: 1 Kings 8:54 (*Solomon at dedication of temple*), Daniel 6:10 (*Daniel routinely praying 3 times a day*), Luke 22:41 (*Jesus in Garden of Gethsemane*), Acts 21:5 (*Believers praying as Paul leaves them for Jerusalem*)

The author's informal survey indicated only 7% of those who pray in private kneel for those prayers, though 57% said they had knelt at some time. When might we consider kneeling for prayer and what benefits might it provide?

*Kneeling may be appropriate anytime, but especially before going to bed or when praying in earnest for something. It shows a submission to our King and our mind takes its lead from our body as we seek an audience with God.*

- Standing: 1 Samuel 1:26 (*Hannah asking for a child*), Nehemiah 9:2 (*the people confessed their sins*), Mark 11:25 (*Jesus' instruction to his disciples*).

The author's informal survey indicated 24% of the people who pray in private stand while praying. When might we consider standing for prayer and what benefits might it provide?

*Standing shows respect ("all rise" in a courtroom), and we usually stand as we pray in church.*

- Sitting 2 Samuel 7:18 (*David before the Lord*), 1 Kings 19:4 (*Elijah under the broom tree*)

The author's informal survey indicated 51% of the people who pray in private sit while praying. When might we consider sitting for prayer and what benefits might it provide?

*We are usually sitting as we do our Bible study (personal or group) or devotion, and it would be natural to use this posture before or after our study. It would allow a natural back and forth between study and prayer.*

- Lying down: Ps 6:6 (*I flood my bed with weeping*) and possibly Psalm 63:6 (*On my bed I remember you*)

Lying down does not appear to be a common posture for prayers in Scripture. The author's informal survey, however, showed that 54% of those who pray in private most often pray while lying down. When might we consider lying down for prayer and what benefits might it provide?

*The very last thing we do before we fall asleep, the very first thing upon waking, help for a restless night, in a hospital bed.*



36. Are there any concerns with this posture?

*Very easy to fall asleep in the middle of the prayer! If this is our only time of prayer, we may want to consider adding another time of day or posture to our prayer life.*

37. What do you do with your hands while praying?

*Nothing, folded, clasped...*

38. Again, we have nothing commanded or even recommended in Scripture. Interesting for us as Lutherans, we do have a number of examples in Scripture (1 Kings 8:54, Exodus 9:29, 33, Ps 141:2, 1 Tim 2:8) of people praying with outstretched hands, ready to receive the gifts from God. Would you feel comfortable doing this, or seeing someone else in our worship service doing this? Why?

39. What things might we consider as we decide our posture during our prayers?

*There is no right or wrong posture, but the content of our prayer and our current emotional state may influence our decision.*

40. Do you prefer to use your own words when you pray or use prayers that others have written? When might each be appropriate?

*Specific needs may require specific prayers. Praying together as a group may require prayers that everyone knows and brings special blessings as we share our faith through prayer. Familiar prayers, such as The Lord's Prayer, may stay in our minds forever, through the most difficult of times and when other things seem to fade. Some have an exceptional gift for writing prayers, and reading theirs may be helpful, beneficial, and comforting.*

41. Do you say your prayers out loud or just in your heart? What are some of the benefits of learning to say your prayers out loud?

*May make them more focused and keep our mind more engaged; helps us be ready to pray with others especially in times of need—instead of saying "I'll pray for you," why don't you actually say a prayer right then?*

42. Does it matter to God if we say our prayers aloud or from our heart? (Ps. 139:2,4)

*God knows what we are thinking at all times, so he indeed hears our prayers whether in words or in thoughts.*

43. How often should we pray? Look at Daniel 6:10 (*Daniel prayed three times a day*), Matthew 14:23 (*Jesus went to a quiet place to pray*) John 11:41,42 (*Jesus speaking to the Father*), Luke 23:34 (*on the cross*), 1 Thess. 5:17 (*pray continually*).

*We want to pray frequently and regularly, not just when troubles are near. This makes prayer a habit. The closer we get to God (through Word and Sacrament) the more we will pray. The more we practice the better we'll get at praying.*

44. When it comes to where we should be when we pray, do you think these passages give us conflicting messages?

- Matt. 6:6

*Being in your room has more to do with motive when compared to the Pharisee standing in the middle of the temple so all could see him pray.*

- Matt. 5:16

*Jesus withdrew to a quiet place so his prayer time would not be disturbed.*

- Matt. 14:19

*Jesus was not ashamed to pray publicly before feeding the 5000.*

- Acts 21:5

*Paul and many others knelt and prayed on the beach.*

We may want to seek a quiet place following Jesus' example in Matthew 5 for our regular time in prayer. However, there is nothing wrong with praying in a restaurant, in a hospital room, or any of a number of other places as long as we have the proper motive and not one like the Pharisee wanting praise from others.

Does anyone want to share a favorite place for prayer?

45. What difference will our discussion today make in your prayer life?

**For next week read chapters 9 and 10. Also if it isn't already a regular part of your life, begin reading your Bible every day. If you're comfortable with it, try kneeling or raising outstretched hands and see if it makes a difference in your prayer.**

## **Closing prayer**

"The prayer of a righteous man (person) is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

# Prayer

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### Chapter 9: An Open Invitation from the King

### Chapter 10: Our Petitions to Our Father-King

## Opening prayer

46. What types of things do you ask for in your prayers?

47. Jesus said in Matt. 21:22 "If you believe you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

What does "if you believe" tell us about how our prayers are answered?

*We come to God with complete confidence that he is able to give us whatever we ask for, that there is nothing he cannot do. He is able to give us anything we ask for—but what we ask for may not always be wise.*

48. Read 1 John 5:14-15 and Jesus' words in Mark 14:36. How does the thought "according to his will" affect the answer we get to our prayers?

*Page 109 talks about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, asking the Father to take the impending suffering away from him, yet he also asked that the Father's will be done. As a human, Jesus did not want to face the suffering he knew was coming. But, by asking that the Father's will be done, he subjected himself to the Father's greater wisdom. We don't always get our personal desires because those desires come from our imperfect and selfish will—our old man, but when we don't impede our*

*new man from submitting to God's perfect will we see how our prayers are answered. Our will becomes aligned with God's will. No matter how God answers our prayers, even if he doesn't take our suffering away, we can always put our confidence in his many promises of faith, comfort, perseverance, and preservation.*

49. When is it correct to add "if it is your will" to our prayers?

*When we ask for temporal blessings for which we haven't been given a specific promise—a return to health, a good job, a family, success, a nice day... In a way, we can look at these as our suggestions to God. We know that submitting to his will is not always easy and may be very trying. It may even be exactly opposite of our "suggestion" but, by faith, we joyfully accept his will.*

50. When is it appropriate not to add "if it is your will" to our prayers?

*When asking for spiritual blessings—a stronger faith for self or others, forgiveness of sins, expansion of his Kingdom...*

51. Have you ever thought there are things too trivial to pray for, or have you felt some requests might be too bold? Explain.

*Refer to Ephesians 3:20—"who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine." This passage would make us think we are insulting God by not bringing all of our concerns and needs to him in prayer, regardless of the magnitude. All things are part of the "whatever" we talked about above and we give our King great honor and glory when we bring these requests to him in confidence and faith. We are reminded of the hymn verse "Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer." (What a Friend we Have in Jesus)*

52. What does it mean to pray "in Jesus' name?"

*1) We may come into God's presence because we are his children with the same rights of son-ship as Jesus himself.*

*2) We may come with the authority of Jesus, who was never turned away by his Father.*

*3) We may come into God's presence because of what Jesus has done for us—his perfect life, his death, and his resurrection has reconciled us with our King.*

*4) We come into God's presence because of who Jesus is today—our King and Lord. So we approach God not on our own merit but because of who Jesus is. It isn't necessary that we add "in Jesus'*

*name” to all of our prayers, but there is value in reminding ourselves that we come before the King in trust and with faith in the message of the cross.*

53. From where do we get the confidence to pray boldly?

*The confidence comes only from faith in Jesus, which is a free gift from God. Only in fully believing that Jesus has bridged the divide between us and our Father-King can we pray with confidence. We think of Peter walking on water—it was easy until he let his mind focus on the wind and waves, and then he began to sink. But when he called out for his Lord, when he focused on his Savior, he was saved.*

54. Read the quote from Luther on page 120 and comment on what it means to you.

*When I’m weakest then I’m strongest because I depend entirely on God, and thus I glorify him.*

55. Read Luke 11:9-10. What does this tell us about our prayers?

*We should be persistent in our prayers. The Amplified translation, AMP, translates both verses as “asks and keeps on asking...seeks and keeps on seeking...knocks and keeps on knocking.” What a new perspective this gives us in our prayers.*

56. Why do you think we are encouraged to ask for some things more than once?

*It might not yet be God’s timing. We might not be ready for the answer God has in mind, and we need time to grow into what is needed for God’s plan. We’ll talk more about this next week. Suffice it to say, when we persist, we are simply holding on to God’s promise that he hears and answers all prayers. This strengthens our faith and shows how we honor our King.*

57. In Luke 6:28 God tells us to pray for our enemies and yet we have examples of David calling down curses on his enemies. How are we to understand the imprecatory psalms, such as Psalm 59:12-13, where David asks that his enemies be punished?

*If we read the entire Psalm, we see that these were men who were living in great sin, who were committing violent acts and slandering God’s people. These were more than people David disliked, more than his enemies; they were enemies of the Lord himself. David didn’t say these prayers to seek vindication or vengeance but so that God could be glorified. These are NOT prayers that flow out of personal hatred or anger, but out of love for God’s holiness and glory.*

58. What kinds of prayers do we find in Scripture?

- Acts 4:24, Psalm 103:1-2

*Pure praise and adoration, listing the great things God has done*

- Psalm 51:1-2, Luke 23:42

*Pleading for mercy*

- Psalm 136:1, Luke 17:15-17

*Giving thanks*

- Jonah 2:2, Acts 12:5

*Crying out for help*

- Judges 16:28, Luke 1:13, James 5:16

*Asking for special blessings for self and others*

59. What are the most common things in your prayers?

*Praise, thanksgiving, forgiveness, spiritual blessings for self and others, material blessings...*

60. If you have ever prayed for your enemies or for those who made your life difficult, what difference did it make in your relationship?

61. Have you ever prayed for the Holy Spirit to work in your life or the life of someone else? Have you seen it happen?

62. What changes in your prayer life do you wish to make based on what we have discussed today?

**For next week read chapters 11 and 12. Also if it isn't already a regular part of your life, begin reading your Bible every day. Make a list of the changes you'd like to make in your prayer life and consciously begin making those changes.**

## Closing prayer

“The prayer of a righteous man (person) is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).



# Prayer

Based on *Prayer: An Audience with the King* by Joel V. Petermann

Part of the People's Bible Teachings Series

## Leader's Guide

### Chapter 11: The Father-King Answers Prayer

### Chapter 12: Handbook on Prayer

## Opening prayer

63. Have you ever delayed answering the request of someone, whether a child, friend, or spouse? Why did you delay?

*The request was foolish or not in their best interest, in ignorance they didn't realize what they were asking for, you had something different/better in mind, they couldn't have handled the answer...*

64. Do you think God might use the same reasons for delaying answers for us or giving us something different than we thought we were asking for?

65. The author reminds us that similar prayers may be answered differently. When James the brother of John and an apostle was arrested by Herod Agrippa, he was executed. But when Peter, also an apostle, was arrested by the same man, his life was saved. Believers were praying for the preservation of both men. How can we understand these very different answers to what appear to be very similar prayers in very similar situations?

*The Lord's response was different according to his purpose. We can't always understand God's ways, but we do know they are for our good and the good of his church. It is not our place to question, but to accept.*

66. The author states “There are times when the Lord denies our prayers simply because they are not proper prayers” (pg. 143). As a reminder from previous weeks, what types of things could make our prayers improper?

*Doubt in God’s ability to answer or his desire to hear us, if we are living unrepentant lives giving evidence of unbelief, if we come without the proper humility and awe for the God we approach (maybe feeling self-righteous or saying a mechanical prayer without truly putting our hearts into it)...*

67. If God had a master plan from the beginning of eternity (Ps. 139:16), if he knows everything even before it happens (1 John 3:20), if he is in control of all things (Rom. 8:28), if he is changeless (Ps. 33:11, James 1:17), can our prayers really change God’s course of action?

*Simply, we are told to pray (Matthew 7:7) and that our prayers are powerful and effective (James 5:16) and that we don’t have things because we don’t ask (James 4:2). The best we can do to harmonize these thoughts is to conclude that God has built our prayers into his overall governance of all things. From his perspective things do not change; from our perspective, things may happen differently when we pray (pg 145).*

68. To whom should we pray? Is there ever a reason to pray to anyone or anything other than the Triune God? On what do you base your answer?

*We must only pray to the Triune God. Scripture never tells us to pray to saints, angels, unspecified deities, or any other mediators. We are told to pray to God (Ps. 50:15), that we have but one mediator and this is Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5, 6), and that we are to pray in the name of Jesus (John 14:13). Only the True God has the power to answer our prayers, and only the True God has promised to answer our prayers for our ultimate good.*

69. What are some of the practical applications of this in our world today?

*This invalidates the Roman Catholic practice of praying to saints, or the lodges’ practice of praying to an undesignated deity. We might also want to consider this thought next time we go to a public event where there is an opening invocation left specifically vague so as not to offend anyone in the audience, Christian or non-Christian.*

70. Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit—to whom should we pray?

*Scripture gives us examples of prayers to all three of the Godhead. On page 153, the author references Eph. 2:18 “Through Jesus we both have access to the Father by one Spirit” (“both” referring to Jews and Gentiles as they become one in Christ). All persons of the Trinity are present in this passage. Through Jesus we have access to the Father, and this is possible because of the work of the Spirit as he has created faith in our hearts. As we pray and keep this relationship in mind, we see that it is proper to address any member of the Trinity in our prayers.*

71. What are three reasons that we use the Lord’s Prayer?

*1) It is a prayer that Jesus gave us and since he knows the Father’s will perfectly, we know this prayer is perfectly in line with the Father’s will and therefore will be granted.*

*2) Jesus calls it a model prayer, and we use this to teach us how to form our own prayers with confidence.*

*3) It is a prayer that we know by heart/from heart, and it is capable of bringing great joy in all situations, whether said alone or with a group of believers.*

72. How do we keep it from becoming a mechanical recitation?

*Study and meditate on each word so that our hearts and minds become totally involved in the message we bring to our Father-King. If we meditate on the prayer frequently, the thoughts easily come to mind and pull our hearts with it.*

73. A quick review of the Lord’s Prayer:

- Of what does “our Father” remind us?

*This is to whom we are addressing our prayer. He is our loving father, and we are a part of much larger church body or family—we’re not alone in our prayers and struggles.*

- How do we “hallow his name?”

*We do this when we protect and honor his Word, when we live according to it, when we preach it in its truth and purity. This brings honor and glory to God’s name. The picture is of well-behaved children who bring honor to the family instead of shame.*

- What does it mean to ask that God's kingdom come?

*God's kingdom is the rule of Christ in our hearts, by faith. When we ask that God's kingdom come, we ask that people (including each of us) be brought to faith so that the church will be sustained.*

- What do we mean when we say "thy will be done?"

*We are asking that we would be led to accept our Father's agenda and that God would hinder those things (Satan, the world, our sinful flesh) that would interfere with his plan.*

- When we ask for "daily bread", what might we be thinking about?

*We are asking for the material things we need for our existence. In our materialist world, we might want to consider the difference between "need" and "want". There are a total of seven petitions in this prayer, but this is the only one that talks about meeting our physical needs. We could remind ourselves that this model prayer puts the request for physical blessings a distant second to meeting our spiritual needs. When we are given material blessings, we will want to receive them with thanksgiving.*

- Of what are we reminded when we ask that our sins be forgiven?

*We are great sinners, and our prayers must always begin at the cross of Christ, as we have studied over the past weeks, so that their barrier can be removed and our prayers heard. Forgiveness of sins is the most important part of our spiritual well-being and where all else starts.*

- What warning are we to consider when we say "as we forgive those who have sinned against us?"

*There is no repentance for the unrepentant and proud heart. Our refusal to forgive others is a sign of unbelief and conceit. A forgiving heart is the response of faith to the forgiveness we have received through Christ. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). We are warned "But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matt. 6:15). We must search our hearts to make sure our sinful nature has not built this barrier to our spiritual welfare.*

- What do we mean when we ask that we not be led into temptation?

*We're not asking that we would never be tempted but rather that we would not succumb to the temptations that are an ever-present part of living in this world. We are asking that the Holy Spirit would keep our faith strong and guide into the "good choices" we so often speak about to our children.*

- What does "deliver us from evil" make us think about?

*Each day we are in combat with Satan himself. We know Christ has freed us from the power of the devil and we are no longer under his dominion. However, as long as we are in this world, Satan will try to gain us back. With this short phrase, we are asking for help to not fall into sin but rather to be able to fight the good fight of faith until we are taken safely home.*

God invites our prayers and has the power to answer them. With him, nothing is impossible. Amen—so be it!

**You may want to study the Lord's Prayer in more detail, using Luther's Catechism. Make a list of the changes you'd like to make in your prayer life and consciously begin making those changes.**

## **Closing Prayer**

The Lord's Prayer

"The prayer of a righteous man (person) is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).