

Prayer

Coming to the Throne
with Purpose, Passion and Praise

Kristie Gant

SAMPLE PAGES:

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Lesson One

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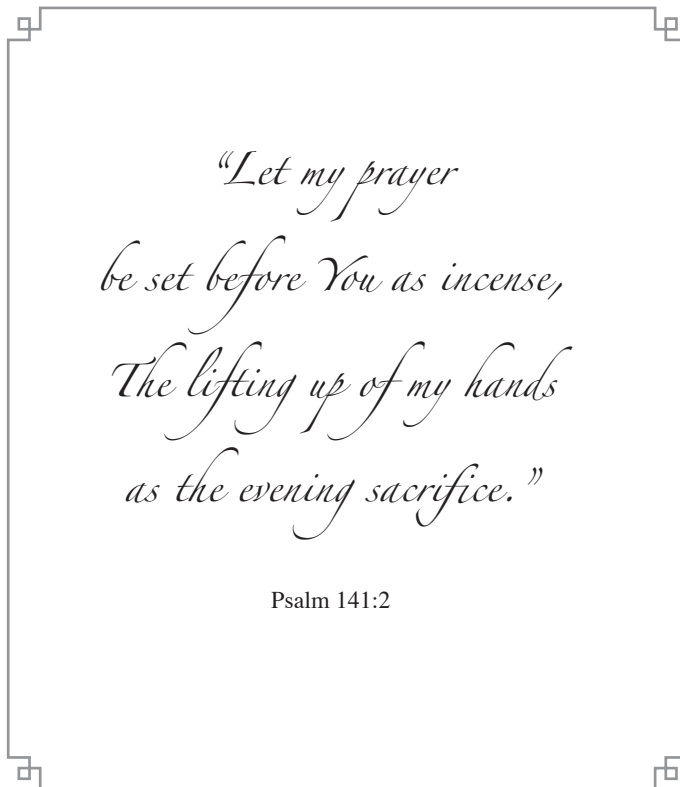
SAMPLE PAGE

*Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:*

*For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

Matthew 6:9b-13 KJV



Lesson *One*

Portrait of A Heart that Prays

*D*uring his first month or two at college, my son, Craig (who has given me permission to share this story) would often call home late at night. Our very short conversations would go something like this:

“Hi, mom! I was just calling to say ‘good-night.’ It’s been a good day, and I wanted to call to let you know I’m fine, except that I’m really tired, but I’m about to go to bed and get some rest.”

“Everything’s fine, though? You’re doing okay?”

“Yep, just needing some sleep. How about if I call you tomorrow and we’ll talk?”

“That would be great. I’ll be home most of the day.”

“Well, I’ll call as soon as I get a chance; but it’s going to be a busy day and may not be ‘till late. Is that okay?”

“That’s fine. You know I love you and love to talk to you anytime.”

“Love you, too, mom.”

“Umm, Craig, before you go... how are you spiritually?”

“I’m doing really well. Just needing sleep right now. I’ll call tomorrow, though. Love you lots. Bye.”

“Bye.”

The conversation had only lasted about a minute, but at least I had heard his voice.

He had no idea how I longed to talk with him, to hear about his day, his struggles, his triumphs, and his needs (so that I could meet them or pray for them). I wanted to be sure he was doing well spiritually. I wanted to feel a part of his life and to be sure he stayed connected to us, his family.

Although the LORD does not need information from us, He does desire to fellowship and communicate with us. This happens through prayer and His Word. And perhaps even more than an earthly parent, He desires (and He is certainly worthy of) more than a quick, “Good-night. It’s late and I’m tired. I’ll talk to you tomorrow. Love you.”

In difficult times, we tend to go to God frequently; but in good times, we often forget that prayer is not simply a way to offer a quick “thank You” or get help in times of need.

Prayer connects us with our real home and sets our desires and affections there. It reminds us who and Whose we are, and it gives us strength for the journey of life. When we pray, it shows that we really know what is important and lasting. It also shows that we are grateful for all God is and all He has done. As we pray, God aligns our desires and hearts with His.

And, although “methods” and “helps” and “schedules” for prayer are useful and good, a strong prayer life needs something else. A strong prayer life is based on a heart attitude of prayer; a heart that desires—and knows it needs—God more than anything else.

So I invite you to join me in a study...a journey of sorts. It will go beyond the basics to the heart of prayer. Looking at “The Lord’s Prayer,” the prayers of Paul, exhortations from Puritan believers, thoughts from contemporary theologians and more, I invite you to join me in examining the heart of prayer. Specifically, I invite you to join me in studying Scriptures which will draw our hearts to prayer.

Craig’s calls have changed much since he left for college. Some mornings, he calls as he is walking to his first class. Sometimes he calls on his way to lunch. And when he calls in the evening, it is often well before bedtime and we have twenty or thirty minutes of wonderful conversation. But perhaps what brings the most blessing to my heart, is that even when he calls late and he is tired and heading toward bed, he now takes the time to talk a little more and tell me about his day.

By the end of this study, may our thoughts and hearts be drawn heavenward in such a way that the LORD will be able to say of us, “My children’s prayers have changed much in a few short weeks...and My heart is blessed.”

DAY ONE

“Let my _____ be set before You as _____,
 the lifting up of my _____ as the evening sacrifice.”
 Psalm 141:2

True prayer is more than words on the lips; it is an expression and activity of the heart.

But what kind of heart is drawn to prayer? And, further, what will draw that heart to more effective, passionate prayer?

1. First and foremost, a heart that is drawn to prayer is a heart that is drawn to God and tender toward Him. As you read the following Scriptures, record what you learn about such a heart in the appropriate columns. (Note: The shaded boxes indicate columns for which most translations will have an entry. Two boxes are completed for you.)

	<i>Phrases describing a heart tender toward God</i>	<i>The source of such a heart</i>	<i>Desires and actions of such a heart</i>
2 Kings 22:19	<i>tender (responsive)</i>		
Jeremiah 24:7			
Jeremiah 32:39-40			
Ezekiel 36:26-27			<i>walks in God's statutes keeps God's laws</i>

2. The gift of a heart tender toward God is one part of the larger gift of salvation (deliverance from sin's penalty and dominion). All people are sinners; God gives salvation to all those who repent of their sin, trust in Christ's substitutionary death on the cross as the payment for their sins, and choose to follow Christ rather than self.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the **gift of God** is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23

“For by grace you have been saved...not of yourselves, it is the **gift of God**, not of works...” Ephesians 2:8-9

“For **with the heart one believes unto righteousness...**” Romans 10:10

Now for the question of utmost importance: Is your *heart* tender toward God? Have you received the gift of a heart of flesh, and has God put His Spirit within you? In other words, are you sure that God has delivered you from the penalty of sin (spiritual death) and given you new life? If not, be encouraged and keep studying, for God says the Scriptures “...are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

2 Timothy 3:15

3. It is important to understand that prayer, too, is a gift that accompanies salvation. Christ said,

*“...No one comes to the Father except through Me...no one can come to Me unless it has been **granted** to him by My Father.”* John 14:6, 6:65

The ability and desire to come to God—in salvation, in prayer, or any other way—is a gift of grace. God calls people to accept these gifts and draw near to Him, but only those who hear and act on His call to salvation can do so.

Read or skim the account of Saul’s (he is also called Paul) “Damascus Road” experience in Acts 9:1-11. When you get to verse 11, use the space below to record the first thing the Lord reveals to Ananias about Saul’s actions after he becomes a believer.

4. Although Saul had been a very religious man (Philippians 3:4-6), and as a Pharisee would have said many prayers, it was not until he was a believer that he truly prayed. Since true prayer is a matter of the heart, there are prayers that really are no prayer at all. Record what you learn from Isaiah 29:13.

5. Is your heart tender toward God or far from Him? Are your prayers near to God in heart, or in words only? If God spoke to someone concerning you, would one of the first things He said be, “Behold, my child is praying.”?

If you are not sure that God has given you a new heart and put His Spirit within you (in other words, if you are not sure you are saved) then now is the time to make sure. Spend a few minutes meditating on the thoughts in Appendix A.

If you know that you are a believer and that God has put His Spirit within you and given you a new heart, are you thankful? Do you regularly express your gratitude for what God has done? Do you live in remembrance of the greatness of His salvation? Do you want to glorify God by living, more and more, in line with the desires of this new heart?

Wherever you are right now in your “prayer life,” will you choose today to make the disciple’s request your own? Read Luke 11:1 and write out the request made by one of the disciples. Use words that make it your own prayer.

DAY TWO

“ _____ prayer be _____ before _____ as incense,
the _____ up of my _____ as the evening _____.”

Psalm 141:2

Yesterday, you looked at the *kind* of heart that is drawn to prayer: one which has been *delivered* from the penalty of sin. For the next few days, you will search the Scriptures to discover specific things which draw such a heart to pray. The first of these is:

A true and increasing knowledge of God that *delights* the soul

1. The psalmists are one of the best examples of how true knowledge of God culminates in prayer. Using the chart below, make a list of some things the psalmists knew about God that drew their hearts to praise, adoration, thanksgiving and worship. Read the three examples and then continue on your own. (Note that you will not have an entry for every verse.)

Thoughts about God which drew the psalmist to praise, adoration, thanksgiving and worship

References:

Thoughts:

Psalm 95:1-7

95:1	<i>He is the Rock of our salvation</i>
95:3	<i>He is great, the great King above all gods</i>
95:4-5	<i>All places on earth, both high and low, are His</i>
95:	

Psalm 96:4-6

Psalm 98:1-3

Psalm 99:1-9

2. The heart that is drawn to pray is a heart that increasingly comes to know God. As each new understanding and each new truth about God becomes the focus of meditation, the heart will respond with praise, adoration, thanksgiving and worship.

Increasing in the knowledge of God is the activity of eternal life—and for the believer, eternal life has already begun! Write John 17:3 below.

3. When you think about God’s holiness, faithfulness, strength, majesty, salvation, righteousness, forgiveness, mighty works, etc., do you think on these things until you cannot help but worship?

- a. Using the chart you completed on page 17, take several minutes to reread and contemplate the scriptures and think about your LORD.
- b. Now, pray (by reading or singing) the words of two verses of “*How Great Thou Art*.” Is your heart drawn to the Lord as the songwriter’s must have been?

O Lord my God!

When I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy pow’r thro’out the universe displayed,
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee;
How great thou art, how great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee;
How great thou art, how great thou art!

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin;
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee;
How great thou art, how great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee;
How great thou art, how great thou art!¹

4. One of the purposes of this course is to enhance and increase your knowledge of God...and therefore to draw your heart to prayer. As you have thought about God today:

- a. If your heart has been drawn to prayer, then thank God now for making your heart tender and response to His Word.
- b. If your heart has not fervently been drawn to prayer, but earnestly longs to be, then take time to let the Lord know your desires.
- c. If your heart has not sincerely been drawn toward God and prayer, then read Appendix B now.

DAY THREE

“Let my _____ be set _____ You as incense,
 the lifting _____ hands as the evening sacrifice.”
 Psalm _____:2

So far, our picture of a praying heart shows that it is:

One which has been *delivered* from the penalty of sin.

One which has a true and increasing knowledge of God that *delights* the soul.

Today, you will add a third characteristic. A heart that prays is:

One which has a sense of its *dependence* upon God.

The praying heart understands that God alone can meet the physical and spiritual needs of life. Because it relies on the gracious promises of God to fulfill those needs, it cannot help but approach the Lord in constant, humble and earnest prayer.

1. For each of the following passages, record *at least* one thing (physical or spiritual) which comes from the hand of the Lord.

A Few of the Lord's Provisions

Psalm 65:1-10

Psalm 104:14-28

Psalm 121:1-8

Psalm 145:14-21

2 Corinthians 3:5, 9:8-11

Ephesians 1:7

Hebrews 13:20-21

2. God has promised to provide for all our needs—and He does! Yet we must not take His promises for granted and become careless in prayer. On the contrary, His promises should stir us up to prayer!

God wants us to ask Him for what we need. Regarding a promise that He has *already made* to His people, God says in Ezekiel 36:37,

“...I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them...”

In other words, God wants His people to ask Him for all things, including those things He has already promised. If you know other scriptures which instruct us to ask God for what we need, write at least one below.

3. Why do you think God desires His children to ask Him for things He has already promised to provide?

4. Put a check mark beside the items in each list about which you are *most aware* of your need (dependence) and God’s provision:

Needs of *Physical life*

- breath
- food
- drink
- shelter
- clothing
- safety

Needs of *Spiritual life*

- forgiveness
- deliverance from sin’s penalty and power
- strength for ministry
- ability to pray
- ability to know Him
- God’s Word

Add at least two more items to each list.

5. The more we consider our needs and God’s ability and promises to provide, the more our hearts will be drawn to petition, supplication and intercession.

I once heard someone say that a good way to find out where you think you are sufficient on your own is to examine what you *don’t* pray for. In response to this thought, take three or four minutes to examine your prayers and fill out the columns below. In which areas of life are you most dependent on God, and in which areas are you most dependent on yourself?

I often pray about:

I often fail to pray about:



6. Read the following passage slowly and out loud:

*“Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!
Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits...”*

Psalm 103:1-2

Now read the last phrase again.

End your study time today by praying Scripture. Begin with the words of Psalm 103 (above), and then continue in your own words. For example:

You could pray these words, as they appear, as a prayer of **worship**, praise and thanksgiving for the LORD’s provision. But there are many other ways you could use these words in prayer.

Does your heart feel a great sense of **dependence** upon the LORD right now? Do you know how much you or someone you love needs God’s promised provision? If so, use these words to express your dependence upon Him and to request the things you or your loved ones need. You might start your prayer,

“LORD God, I do bless Your name with all that is within me, and I do not forget all of Your benefits. Right now, I come before You depending on You, Your name, and Your benefits. Father, there are some needs that are on my heart...”

Or, is your heart convicted of negligence in remembering the Lord’s benefits? Have you been going through life acting as if you were self-sufficient rather than God-sufficient? If so, turn these words into a prayer of confession and **repentance**. You might begin,

“Father, I humbly come asking for Your forgiveness. I have not remembered Your holy name and Your benefits as I should...”

When you have finished praying (in whatever way the Spirit leads you), initial the box as the “Amen” to your prayer.

DAY FOUR

“_____ my prayer be _____ as incense,
the _____ up of my hands as the _____ sacrifice.”
_____ 141:2

A praying heart is:

One which has been *delivered* from the penalty of sin.

One which has a true and increasing knowledge of God that *delights* the soul.

One which has a sense of *dependence* upon God.

and

One which *detests* the depths of its own sinfulness.

1. We tend to think better of ourselves than we really are. Pop culture, television commercials, worldly wisdom and even our own hearts can reinforce this tendency. Scripture, on the other hand, tells us the truth. As you read the following verses, record truths about the sinfulness of man. (If time is limited, complete only the bolded entries.)

What God Says About Man and Sin

a. Psalm 130:3-4

b. Isaiah 64:6

c. Jeremiah 17:9

d. Romans 3:10-12

e. Ephesians 2:1-3 (note the phrases which describe man's condition before salvation)

2. Every sin that a Christian has committed or will commit is fully forgiven in Christ. Romans 8:1 says,

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...”

Although God forgives a Christian’s sins (past, present and future) on the basis of Christ’s work alone, we still have need of daily confession in order to maintain close fellowship with God. Write out 1 John 1:9 below.

The New Testament was originally written in Greek. The Greek word translated “confess” in 1 John 1:9 means “to say the same thing as.”² To confess is not simply to list sins you have committed; rather, it is to agree with God that the sins which you have committed are wrong, that they are against Him, and that, with His help, you will work to remove them from your life.

Below, paraphrase 1 John 1:9 by substituting information from the previous paragraph for the word “confess.”

3. How long has it been since you have said the same thing about your sin that God says about it? Many Christians today do not call sin what it really is. Rather than detesting sin, we often sugarcoat it, substituting words such as “fib” for “lie,” “affair” for “adultery,” and “I’m sorry” for “I have sinned...will you forgive me?” Why do we do this? One reason is that, even though our hearts (as Christians) are redeemed and responsive to God, they are not yet perfect. They are still easily influenced to sin, able to deceive us...and they tell us we are better than we really are.

Spend a few minutes meditating on the passages in question #1 and the wonder of God’s forgiveness in Christ. Then, read aloud the following excerpts from prayers of confession. As you do, circle two or three phrases that you could use in your own prayers.

O LORD,

No day of my life has passed that has not proved me guilty in thy sight.
Prayers have been uttered from a prayerless heart;
Praise has been often praiseless sound;
My best services are filthy rags.

MERCIFUL LORD,

Pardon all my sins...of lip, life and walk,
of hard-heartedness, unbelief, presumption, pride...
in time misspent,
in yielding to Satan’s wiles...
in quenching the Holy Spirit...
Good Lord, hear; and hearing, forgive.

...these sins I mourn, lament, and for them cry pardon.
Work in me more profound and abiding repentance...
Grant that through the tears of repentance I may see more clearly the brightness
and glories of the saving cross.³

Choose at least one of the phrases you circled to use in prayer now. Initial the box when you finish.

DAY FIVE

“Let my _____ be set before You _____ ,
the lifting up of my _____ as the evening _____ -.”
_____ :2

It has well been said that, “The Scriptures add fuel to the fire of the heart’s devotion.”⁴ In light of this thought, a fifth attribute of a praying heart is:

A praying heart is *diligent* in the study of the Word of God.

1. Underline conditions for effective prayer that Jesus gives in John 15:7—

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you,
you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”

2. God uses the Scriptures to draw us to prayer. He speaks to us through His Word and we respond to Him in prayer, making a two-way conversation.

a. In Psalm 27:8, when God says “*Seek My face*,” how does the psalmist’s heart respond?

b. In Nehemiah 8:2-12, how did the people respond when they heard God’s Word?

3. Perhaps George Müller best exemplifies and explains how the Scriptures draw the heart to prayer. In the following quote, he describes his daily time in the Word. As you read, circle the words “meditation” “meditate,” “meditated,” etc., each time you see them.

“I saw the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, whilst meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord. I began, therefore, to meditate on the New Testament early in the morning. The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words for the Lord’s blessing upon his precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching, as it were, into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated on, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably thus, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that, though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer.”⁵

4. Unlike some worldly types of meditation which involve clearing the mind, biblical meditation involves filling your mind with thoughts of God. During biblical meditation, you should ponder, consider, and think upon truths (about God and His Word) which will eventually lead your heart to prayer.

Read Psalm 19:7-14.

a. What things does God's Word (law, commandments, etc.) accomplish in the life of a believer?

b. At what point do you see the psalmist's heart drawn to prayer as he meditates on the Word of God?

5. Take one last look at your portrait of a heart that prays. A praying heart is:

One which has been *delivered* from the penalty of sin.

One which has a true and increasing knowledge of God that *delights* the soul.

One which has a sense of *dependence* upon God.

One which *detests* the depths of its own sinfulness.

One which is *diligent* in the study of God's Word.

Do you have the first "qualification" for prayer? Have you turned to the Lord for forgiveness and salvation and been delivered from the penalty of sin? If not, will you do so right now?

If you are a child of God, which of the last four areas is strongest in your life? Which is weakest?

This course is designed to strengthen and equip you in each of the last four areas. Each week, as you complete the study and meditate on the Scriptures, the Lord will draw your heart more and more to prayer—prayer that will bring glory to Him. (Appendix D provides helps for discipling children in the discipline of prayer.)

6. Begin a time of prayer with the words of your memory verse. After expressing your heart to God, end your prayer with the words of Psalm 19:14. Initial the box when you are done.