

# I'M PRAYING FOR YOU

What do the New Testament Epistles Teach Us About Prayer?

## LESSON SCHEDULE:

Lesson 1 -	I Thessalonians	Praying with Thanksgiving
Lesson 2	II Thessalonians	Praying with Perseverance
Lesson 3	Romans	Praying with Hope
Lesson 4	Ephesians – Part 1	Praying with Expectation
Lesson 5	Ephesians – Part 2	Praying with Humility
Lesson 6	Philippians	Praying with Joy
Lesson 7	Colossians	Praying Earnestly
Lesson 8	James	Praying for Each Other
Lesson 9	Hebrews	Praying with Confidence

## STUDY SUGGESTIONS for this series:

### FOCUS INTENTIONALLY

As you begin your study time, it is always wise to quiet your heart and mind – to be still. Put aside the details and distractions of your life, so that you can begin to focus on your great God and His amazing love for you. By using one of the very powerful names for God that is suggested in your study guide, you will find many reasons to give your thanksgiving and worship to the LORD. He is waiting to meet with you.

### READ THOUGHTFULLY

Read the Scripture passage carefully. You might want to have 2 or 3 different translations so that you can compare words and ideas. Note in particular any verses that are prayers or have some information about prayer. Take your time so that the Holy Spirit can begin to speak to you through the written Word of God.

### PONDER CAREFULLY

As you take time to meditate and to consider the questions, you will find that certain verses, phrases and ideas will catch your attention. Jot down some of your thoughts and ideas, so that you can refer to them again. Take your time and you will find that the Spirit of God will guide you and will reveal the truths to you that are most relevant at this time in your spiritual journey. What is it that you think the Holy Spirit would like you to learn about what it means to pray?

### RESPOND PERSONALLY

In the honesty and intimacy of this time, why don't you talk over your concerns and your questions with Jesus. You can tell Him exactly what you are thinking and He will meet you at that point and walk with you on your journey. Let Him show what He wants you to incorporate into your spontaneous and deliberate times of prayer. Then do not delay in responding to His invitation to you. He promises to bless you and to answer your prayers!

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What do the New Testament Epistles Teach Us About Prayer?

Lesson 1

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## I THESSALONIANS – Praying with Thanksgiving

“We thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers.  
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.”

I Thessalonians 1: 2 – 3

Thessalonica, a busy, prosperous, seaport city, was visited by Paul on his second missionary journey. He had to leave there because of intense opposition, but later Timothy was able to visit and brought Paul a very encouraging report. This letter was written in response to this report about the church. Paul wanted to encourage them, to challenge them, and to bring into focus the fact that Jesus Christ would return again. In the first 3 chapters Paul tells them of his prayers of thanksgiving for them and in the final chapters he includes several short prayers on their behalf. Finally he asks them to pray for him.

### FOCUS INTENTIONALLY –

Take a few moments to focus on your great God and His amazing love for you. Remember that He is ELOHIM, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and that He has invited you to come to Him so that He can show you His desires for you through His Word. Give Him your praise . . .

### READ THOUGHTFULLY –

1. **I Thessalonians.** Try reading it out loud. It takes about 10 minutes.  
As you read, note the prayers of Paul and what he has to say about the subject of prayer.  
Watch for clues like - “We thank God”, “May God . . .” or “May the Lord. . .”.
2. Background story – Acts 17: 1 – 15. Describe the situation in Thessalonica in your own words.

### PONDER CAREFULLY

1. What was Paul's relationship to the believers in Thessalonica? What was the purpose of this letter?
2. As you think about his prayer in I Thessalonians 3: 12 – 13, what are the specific requests that Paul made? What would the believers learn from this?  
  
Try to summarize the importance of love and of holiness as it is discussed in this letter.
3. In his final instructions, Paul gave them 14 very specific commands for living - chapter 5: 14 – 22. Why do you think praying and giving thanks are included in this list?
4. The prayer in I Thess. 5: 23 – 24 repeats some of the same themes that were in the other prayer (ch. 3). What are the similarities and the differences? What do you think it means for a believer to be “blameless”?
5. How does Paul repeatedly teach them that their new life in Christ is lived by faith and through the power of the Holy Spirit – even in his prayers?

### RESPOND PERSONALLY

1. If Paul were writing a letter to you today, for what would he be giving thanks to God?
2. How would Paul be praying for God to be at work in your life?
3. Who needs your encouragement through prayer? How can you use these prayers on their behalf?

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## II THESSALONIANS – Praying with Perseverance

“With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of His calling, and that by His power He may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.”

II Thessalonians 1: 11

Just a short time after Paul wrote his first letter to the believers in Thessalonica, he needed to write to them again. Apparently they were waiting expectantly for the imminent return of Jesus, but there were some serious misunderstandings about the things that would precede that event and their responsibilities until that time. As Paul wrote his second letter to them, he wanted to encourage them as well as to challenge them and correct some of these errors.

### FOCUS INTENTIONALLY –

Take a few moments to focus on your great God and His amazing love for you. Remember that He is EL ELYON, the Most High and Exalted God, and that He has invited you to come to Him so that He can show you His mercy and His desires for you through His Word. Give Him your praise . . .

### READ THOUGHTFULLY –

1. **II Thessalonians.** Try reading it out loud. It takes about 6 minutes.  
As you read, note the prayers of Paul and what he has to say about the subject of prayer.  
Watch for clues like - “May God . . .” or “May our Lord. . .”.
2. What were the problems that the believers in Thessalonica were experiencing when Paul wrote to them?

### PONDER CAREFULLY

There are 4 short prayers that Paul has for these believers in this letter and 1 request for prayer.

1. As you look at each of these prayers, think about what Paul is really asking and rewrite each one in your own words.  
  
II Thess. 1: 11 – 12  
  
II Thess. 2: 16 – 17  
  
II Thess. 3: 5  
  
II Thess. 3: 16
2. As Paul prayed, where was his confidence? What would the believers have understood about who God is and what He wanted to do for them?
3. As Paul concluded his letter, he gave the people some specific prayer requests – a glimpse into his passion and concerns. What makes an impression on you as you think about Paul's own needs and desires?

### RESPOND PERSONALLY

1. If you were writing to a trusted friend who has promised to pray for you, how would you finish this sentence?  
“Pray for me that I . . .”
2. Is there someone who needs your encouragement? Could you honestly let them know that you would be willing to pray for them, using the prayers in this lesson as your basis?

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## ROMANS – Praying with Hope

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.  
I remember you constantly in my prayers at all times. . .

Romans 1: 8 and 10

The letter to the Romans from Paul is a clear and systematic presentation of the Good News that God declares those who believe to be “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” – Romans 3: 24. Paul did not know the believers that lived in Rome, but word had come to him that the early church was thriving there and he longed to go and get to know them. Meanwhile his letter would explain to them the essentials of their new faith, including how this doctrine should be applied to daily living. Paul was excited about the Gospel and its power to save. Think about how his own life had been changed! Paul longed for both the Jewish and Gentile believers to be “established in their faith”.

### FOCUS INTENTIONALLY –

Take a few moments to focus on your great God and His amazing love for you. Remember that He is EL SHADDAI, God Almighty, the All-Sufficient One, who desires you to come to Him and to rest in His bounty and to rely on His promises. Give Him your praise . . .

### READ THOUGHTFULLY –

As you read these passages, take note of the prayers, the blessings, and what Paul said about his own prayer life.  
**Romans 1: 1 – 17, 8: 18 – 27, Romans 15: 4 – 13, 15: 23 – 33 and 16: 25 - 27**

### PONDER CAREFULLY

1. Romans 1 – What did Paul want to convey to these new believers in Rome through his introductory remarks?
2. Romans 8 - Paul had just carefully explained the truth about our sinful natures and the great and powerful gift of the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. What did he explain to them about the ministry of the Spirit and prayer?
3. Romans 15: 4 – 13 – Two blessings or prayers (verses 5 – 6 and 13)  
What were the deep desires that Paul expressed in these verses for those who belong to Christ Jesus?  
Write out these verses in your own words and expand on the ideas that are expressed in them.
4. Romans 15: 23 – 33 – Why did Paul want his brothers in Rome to pray for him. What difference would their prayers make? How would praying strengthen them and help him in his struggles?
5. Romans 16: 25 – 27 – Paul's Benediction – What was Paul's final conclusion or blessing? What did it mean?  
Be sure to check out several translations!

### RESPOND PERSONALLY

1. What is it that you need today? Endurance, encouragement, a spirit of unity, joy, peace, hope, patience, an assurance of God's will, or an open door for ministry, or protection. Why not share your struggle or need with another believer and together you can believe that **God is able?**
2. Who needs your prayer support and encouragement? Why not make a list of 10 names and use the prayer in Romans 15: 5 or 13 as your guide. God is waiting to bless them and you!

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## EPHESIANS – Praying with Expectation

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,  
I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Ephesians 1: 15 - 16

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia and a vital commercial center of the Roman Empire. The church there was a center for evangelistic outreach. This letter undoubtedly went to many churches located in this area. Paul had been in Ephesus at the end of his second journey and then spent about 3 years there on his third journey. Sometime later, while he was under "house arrest" in Rome, he wrote this letter to them. Paul urgently wanted these believers to understand the blessings of life "*in Christ*" and to experience the "*glorious riches of Christ*" in this life.

### FOCUS INTENTIONALLY –

**Take a few moments to focus on your great God** and His amazing love for you. Remember that He is EL OLAM, the everlasting God. His purposes and his plans, his mercy and his grace have no beginning and no end. His promises are as true for you now as they have been throughout all the ages. Give Him your praise . . .

**READ THOUGHTFULLY –** (This is Part 1 for Ephesians. Next week will be part 2.)

1. **Ephesians 1 and 2.**
2. Background story – Acts 18: 18 – 21 and Acts 19. It's a very dramatic story. Don't miss it!

### PONDER CAREFULLY

1. As you read Ephesians 1: 3 – 14, make a list of all of the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ.
2. What aspects of prayer does Paul mention in verses 15 – 17?
3. Try to re-write or organize the various requests that are in Ephesians 1: 17 – 23.
4. How would you summarize Paul's great and passionate desire for the "saints in Ephesus" and the "saints in Santa Cruz"?

### RESPOND PERSONALLY

3. Blessing IN CHRIST! What are the blessings that you are experiencing because you have put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? What could you change in order to more fully grasp "the riches of His grace"?
4. Using Paul's prayer, would you be willing to change the words "you" to "I" or "me" and "your" to "my" so that these requests become the prayer of your own heart? Why not write out this personal prayer – vs. 17 – 20.
5. Who needs to know that you give thanks for them and regularly remember them in your prayers? This might be just the word of encouragement that someone needs from you today.

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## EPHESIANS – Praying with Humility

“I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit.  
Ephesians 3: 16

One of the themes of this letter to the Ephesians is “in Christ Jesus”. The phrase or ones similar to it are repeated more than 33 times in the book. How deeply Paul wanted the believers to understand all that is included in their new life in Christ. You might want to take a highlighter pen and use it to mark each of these statements in the book of Ephesians, for it will remind you that you, as a child of God are chosen in Him, redeemed in Him, made strong in Him and in His mighty power and much more!

### FOCUS INTENTIONALLY –

Take a few moments to focus on your great God and His amazing love for you. Remember that He is Jehovah, Yahweh – the unchanging and redeeming God. He declared to Moses that His name was “I Am Who I Am” – the One true God and yet He knows you by name and wants you to come to Him and to trust Him completely. Give Him your praise . . .

### READ THOUGHTFULLY –

**Ephesians 3 – 6.** Take the time to absorb these truths in at least 2 or 3 different translations. As you read these 4 chapters, notice especially 3: 7 – 21 and 6: 10 – 20.

### PONDER CAREFULLY

1. What do you think Paul is referring to when he says “for this reason I kneel before the Father . . .” in 3: 14? What is the reason that he feels he can pray to God?
2. What is Paul asking God to do for these believers?
  - a. Ephesians 3: 16 – 17a
  - b. Ephesians 3: 17b – 19
  - c. Ephesians 3: 20 – 21
3. Why do you think that Paul includes these verses about prayer as part of his concluding remarks about how to “be strong in the Lord and His mighty power” – Ephesians 6: 10 – 18?
4. As he often does in his letters, Paul asks for the believers to pray for him. What impresses you about his primary request when he could have asked for so many other comforts and needs?

### RESPOND PERSONALLY

1. What would it mean for you to believe, to trust, that “from His glorious and unlimited resources that God wants to actually empower you with inner strength through His Spirit” and it is all because of His incredibly great love for you?
2. Think of others whose lives are extremely challenging right now. Why not pray for them right now? What would be the most important thing you could ask God to do for them?

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## PHILIPPIANS – Praying with Joy

I pray that your love will overflow more and more,  
and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding.  
For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives  
Philippians 1: 9 – 10 (NLT)

Philippi was a culturally diverse Roman city on the main highway to Rome. The church at Philippi had a diverse group of believers and Paul was eager to make sure that they understood that they were all equal in Christ, all sinners saved by God's grace. He wrote this letter while he was in prison in Rome and yet the theme is JOY. Paul wanted them to abound in love and to experience God in such a way that it would lead to a mature understanding of His ways and will.

### FOCUS INTENTIONALLY –

Take a few moments to focus on your great God and His amazing love for you. Remember that He is "Jehovah Jireh", the God who Sees and will provide. He understands the past, sees the present, and knows the future. You can trust Him, so why not give Him your thanksgiving and praise?

### READ THOUGHTFULLY –

**Philippians** - Read the whole letter, if you can. Then re-read Philippians 1: 1 – 11 and 4: 6-7 again.

### PONDER CAREFULLY

#### Philippians 1: 1 – 11

1. Why does Paul want the Philippians to know that he prays with joy and thanksgiving when he thinks of them?
2. What are Paul's goals or desires for the people whom he loves? As God answers his prayer, what will be the results?

**Philippians 1: 18 – 26** – What effect do the prayers of the Philippians have on Paul's deliverance?

#### Philippians 4: 4 – 7

1. What is Paul's "prescription" for experiencing the peace of God?
2. Is there a difference between prayer and petition?
3. Why is giving thanks so very important to God and to the believer, too?  
How does Paul model these truths through his own testimony in 4: 10 – 14?

### RESPOND PERSONALLY

1. As you think about these prayers, what do you think that the Lord Jesus would like you to know? What would He want you to experience? Why not ask Him and give Him thanks for what He will continue to do in your life – Philippians 1: 6?
2. Do you know someone who is anxious or needs to find the peace of God? Perhaps you can share something from Philippians with them or from your own experience. Then pray with them and for them.

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## COLOSSIANS – Praying Earnestly

“For this reason we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

Colossians 1: 9

Colosse was one of the new churches with mostly Gentile believers. Epaphras was probably the one who brought the Gospel back to his home town after being with Paul in Ephesus. When Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he had time to write several important letters including this one. He knew that it was extremely important that these believers understand that Jesus was truly God and that their lives were now “hidden with Christ in God”. He told them in a variety of ways throughout the letter that “Christ is all, and is in all”.

### FOCUS INTENTIONALLY –

Take a few moments to focus on your great God and His amazing love for you. Remember that He is ADONAI, the Lord. Take some time to read about Him in Colossians 1: 15 - 20 and then give Him your praise . . .

### READ THOUGHTFULLY –

**Colossians** – all of it. Try reading it out-loud as they would have in the early church.

### PONDER CAREFULLY

#### **Colossians 1: 3 – 14**

1. What is it about the church in Colossae that Paul admires and for which he give thanks to God?
2. What do you think of when you hear the words “God’s will”? Why did Paul pray for them in this way? In verse 10 Paul explains what he meant by that term and then describes what it will mean to the believer. Can you express Paul’s prayer in to your own words?

#### **Colossians 4: 2 – 6**

Final instructions are clearly an important part of any manual! What do you think it means to “devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart”?

#### **Colossians 4: 12 – 13**

What an interesting description of Epaphras, the one who had brought the message of Jesus Christ’s love to this city and cares so much for their spiritual growth and understanding of God’s will for them. What impresses you about the description of his prayer life? What does it mean to “pray earnestly”?

### RESPOND PERSONALLY

1. Spiritual maturity, understanding God’s will, producing good fruit, learning to know God better do not happen overnight, do they? One step at a time. One day at a time. It is God who will do His miraculous work in our hearts and minds as we humble ourselves and yield up our rights and position to His sovereignty. What is your prayer today? Perhaps the prayer in Colossians 1 can help you express your desires.
2. Then you might use the prayer in Colossians 4: 12b as you pray for young believers and your family & friends. Who would you include in each list?



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## James – Praying for Each Other

The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results”.

James 5: 16b - NLT

After James, the half-brother of Jesus, did come to faith in Christ, he became a recognized leader of the church in Palestine. As he observed these believers he had some major concerns which he addressed in this letter, which was then circulated throughout the whole region. He was bothered that so many of them were continuing to live exactly as they had before they came to faith in Jesus Christ rather than following the new and sometimes radical ways of their Savior. He was also concerned that they understood that their actions were a direct and visible indication of the genuineness of their faith.

### FOCUS INTENTIONALLY –

Take a few moments to focus on your great God and His amazing love for you. Remember that He is JEHOVAH RAPHA, the LORD who heals. He has the power to make the all things new, to bring to life that which is dead! When have you experienced His healing touch? Give Him your praise . . .

### READ THOUGHTFULLY –

**James** – Read it in at least two translations and note the passages which are about prayer.

### PONDER CAREFULLY

**James 1: 2 – 8** – Unlike Paul's letters, James immediately begins to instruct the believers. How does he address their situation and what are his recommendations?

#### **James 3: 13 – 4: 7**

Once again James talks about wisdom and prayer. How would you describe the problem that he is addressing in this part of his letter? How does our behavior effect our answers to prayer or does it?

#### **James 5: 13 – 18**

1. James ends his letter with more instructions about when and how to pray, doesn't he? What does he want them to understand?
2. How do you integrate verses 15 and 16 with your own experience? Is it the righteousness of the ones who is praying, the number of people who are praying, the faith of the one who is sick or the ones who are praying that make the difference? What do you believe Scripture teaches?
3. What do you think the practical application of verse 16 might be? Is verse 19 and 20 related to this in any way in your mind?  
Colossians 3: 16  
Ephesians 4: 32 – 5: 2  
I Thessalonians 5: 11 and 14

### RESPOND PERSONALLY –

Jesus, Himself, told His disciples, “Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking and you will receive and find and the door will be opened for you” – Matthew 7: 7 NLT. What keeps you from asking and receiving when your Heavenly Father is waiting to “supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”?

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Lesson 9

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## HEBREWS – Praying with Confidence

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence,  
so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

Hebrews 4: 16

It was tempting for the new Jewish believers in Jerusalem to go back to some of their old beliefs and traditions. While we are unsure whether or not Paul wrote this letter, it is clear that the author wanted them to move forward in their faith journey. He clearly presented Jesus as being far superior to the angels, to Moses and Joshua, and to the Old Testament priests, ministry and sacrificial system. He encouraged them to “run life’s race with perseverance” and to “fix their eyes on Jesus”.

### FOCUS INTENTIONALLY –

Take a few moments to focus on our great God and His amazing love for you. Remember that He is **Jehovah Tsidquenu – The Lord Our Righteousness**. It’s amazing – “God Made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God – II Corinthians 5: 21. Give Him your praise . . .

### READ THOUGHTFULLY – Read Hebrews 2 – 5 and 12 - 13

What would you say is the emphasis in these two sections of this letter?  
Mark the verses that focus on prayer.

### PONDER CAREFULLY

1. Hebrews 5: 7 – 10 – When Jesus prayed . . .  
What do you learn from Jesus example and the way His Father answered His prayers?
2. Hebrews 4: 14 – 16  
What was the role of the high priest in the Old Testament? Read Hebrews 7: 11 – 28  
How does the phrase “approach the throne of grace with confidence” or “come boldly to the throne of our gracious God” influence the way you pray? Or does it?
3. Hebrews 13: 18 – 19 What do you notice about the author’s request for prayer in this letter?
4. Hebrews 13: 20 – 21 –  
As the author concludes his letter, he prays for these believers. To whom does He address His requests?  
What is his hope and desire for them? In whom does he put his trust – the efforts of the people or the mercy and resurrection power of the great Shepherd?

### Bonus questions –

1. Want to learn more about the “God of Peace”?  
Isaiah 9: 6 -7  
John 14: 27 and 16: 33  
Romans 15: 33 & 16: 20  
Philippians 4: 7 – 9  
Colossians 3: 15  
I Thessalonians 4: 23  
II Thessalonians 3: 16  
Hebrews 13: 20
2. “The Shepherd of the sheep”  
Psalm 23  
John 10: 1 – 16  
I Peter 2: 25  
II Peter 5: 4  
Revelation 7: 15 - 17

### RESPOND PERSONALLY -

Read Hebrews 13: 15 – 16 – How will you respond to Jesus’ invitation to you each day?