

Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. A teacher will teach from the Bible that a disciple of Jesus prays. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

Jesus says, “Ask and it will be given to you” (Matthew 7:7). Paul says, “Pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). And James says, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16). The Bible teaches much about prayer. The second series of 6 teachings is about “The focus of prayer”. There are prayers that focus on God, prayers that focus on your own needs and prayers that focus on the needs of other people. Every topic will be in two parts.

Today we will learn about “A DISCIPLE PRAYS FOR OTHER PEOPLE - PART 1”. Although all prayers are directed to God, in these prayers, you intercede with God for other people. The prayers that focus on other people’s needs can be divided into five kinds: prayers for God’s interests, prayers for Christian workers, prayers for your fellow-Christians, prayers for needy Christians and prayers for non-Christians. In part 1 we will study the first three parts.

Let us read 1 Timothy 2:1-3. “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Saviour.” The Bible teaches Christians that they should pray for everyone. What is meant by “pray for *everyone*”? The context explains that Christians should pray for groups or classes of people, like government leaders, called “kings”; for other people in authority, like the police, parents, church-leaders; and for “Gentiles” (verse 7), like your non-Christian neighbours and colleagues at work. The Bible does not expect that the local church should pray for every single individual in the whole world, because they simply don’t know every individual in the world. However, the Bible does expect the local church to pray for particular groups or classes of people in society without prejudice. For example, Christians should not only pray for ordinary people, but also for the important people, like kings and people in authority. The expression “everyone” (literally “all people”) therefore means, “all people without distinction of race, nationality, or social position”.

POINT 1. A DISCIPLE PRAYS FOR GOD’S INTERESTS

Let us read Matthew 6:9-10. Jesus taught his disciples how Christians should pray. He said, “This is how you should pray, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus teaches you that you should pray for God’s glory, God’s kingdom and God’s will.

First. Pray that God’s name will be glorified.

“God’s glory” is the expression of God’s character and presence. You should pray that people will get to know God’s characteristics, like his holiness, righteousness, love and faithfulness and that they will experience God’s reality and nearness in their lives.

Second. Pray that God’s kingdom will be extended.

“God’s kingdom” is especially God’s sovereign rule, which is recognised in the hearts of Christians and operative in their daily lives. God’s sovereign rule effects their complete salvation, their constitution as a Church, their influence in society and finally, a redeemed universe. Jesus teaches you that you should pray that people would experience God’s sovereign rule in their hearts and lives. Practically, this means that you pray that God may control people’s hearts and outward behaviour. Pray that God may control the people they listen to, the people they associate with and the way they spend their money and time. Especially pray that the gospel may be preached in every nation of the world and in this way people may have a chance to make Jesus the king of their own hearts and lives.

Third. Pray that God’s will is done everywhere.

“God’s will” for people is expressed in the Bible. You should pray that people will read the Bible and, more important, obey what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches also that you should pray for both Christians and non-Christians in the world.

Conclusion. You should pray for other people that they might know and experience God’s glory, God’s kingdom and God’s will.

POINT 2. A DISCIPLE PRAYS FOR CHRISTIAN WORKERS

In Romans 15:30 the apostle Paul writes, "Join me in my struggle by praying to God for me." What does the Bible teach that Christians should pray for Christian workers? How do we join with Christian workers in their struggle by praying to God for them?

First. Pray for more workers in God's kingdom.

Let us read Matthew 9:38. Jesus teaches, "Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field." Jesus showed his disciples that the greatest problem is not that there is no harvest, but that there are not enough harvesters! He said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few" (vs 37). The harvest consists of the people of this world, who are harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. The people in Jesus' time were "harassed". The word means that they were completely worn out and exhausted by the burdens, which the Pharisees put on them. The Pharisees expected the people to keep 613 laws in order to be acceptable to God! The Pharisees regulated the whole society and the lives of individuals by means of 365 prohibitions and 248 commands! However, the Pharisees themselves did not practise what they preached (Matthew 23:3), and yet they expected the ordinary people to carry this burden. The people were completely worn out and exhausted from following a religion that consisted of laws and more laws. The people were "helpless". They were thrown down and lying on the ground in an utterly helpless and forsaken condition. Among all the animals on a farm, sheep are the most helpless. These people were like "sheep without a shepherd". They were left alone to be devoured by ravenous wolves! The ravenous wolves were either the political or the religious leaders of the time of Jesus. Listener, just look around you and see the many people who are worn out by the exploitations of ruthless people and who are thrown down to be trampled on. Jesus says that you should pray that God would send more people who will be like shepherds for these people.

Second. Pray for open doors of opportunity.

Let us read Colossians 4:2-3. The apostle Paul teaches, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains." At the time Paul wrote these words, he was still sitting in prison. He did not pray for an open prison door so that he may go out free! He prayed for open doors of opportunity to proclaim the gospel *in prison*! He asked for Christians to pray for opportunities to preach the gospel to the soldiers, to the judges and even to the emperor to whom he made his appeal. Listener, no matter what your situation may be, God can *open a door of opportunity* for you to witness for Christ. The apostle Paul says that you should pray for Christian workers, that God give them open doors of opportunity to preach the gospel, no matter their circumstances.

Third. Pray for clear and fearless preaching of the gospel.

Let us read Colossians 4:4-6 and Ephesians 6:19. The apostle Paul continues to teach, "Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." "Pray that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel." The Christian workers not only need opportunities to preach the gospel, they need grace and wisdom to preach and teach the gospel clearly, so that people may understand what they hear. The apostles preached the word, not only in their own countries, but also in other cities and countries, where the languages and customs were different. Therefore, they needed wisdom to use the right words to communicate. They needed grace to know how to answer people's questions.

The gospel speaks also about the sins of people and of the coming judgement of God. Many people do not like to hear these things and they persecute the Christians. Therefore, Paul also asked prayer for courage to speak the right words without fear of people. Listener, just consider how people around you react to the gospel. Some react with indifference. Others react with misunderstanding and others react with hatred, because they understand the message, but do not want to accept the message. Therefore, Paul says that you should pray for Christian workers, that God give them wisdom to speak the gospel clearly and give them courage to speak the gospel fearlessly.

Fourth. Pray for the rapid spread of the gospel.

Let us read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2. The apostle Paul teaches, "Brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith." Jesus said that the gospel must first be preached to every nation and only then will he return to judge this world (Matthew 24:14). Millions of people never get one chance to hear the gospel. The end of the world is coming closer. Therefore you must pray that the gospel will be spread fast and effectively to all the people in the world. Pray that God will use the many evangelists who walk from village to village to preach the gospel. Pray for those who spread the gospel through the written word, the radio and the internet. Pray that the gospel may spread quickly to all your family members and neighbours.

Fifth. Pray for the protection of Christian workers.

The apostle Paul asks Christians to pray that God will deliver them from wicked people who spread lies against them, oppose their work or even persecute them. In Romans 15:31 he says, "Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers

in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there.” You should pray that the good works and gifts, which the Christian workers bring, will not be misunderstood, but be thankfully accepted.

Conclusion. You should pray that God send more Christian workers into the world, that they be rescued from wicked people and that their good works be accepted. Also pray that God give them new opportunities to preach the gospel, wisdom to preach it clearly and courage to preach it fearlessly.

POINT 3. A DISCIPLE PRAYS FOR HIS FELLOW-CHRISTIANS

In 1 Samuel 12:23, the prophet Samuel says, “Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you.” Christians have the duty and privilege to pray for one another.

First. Pray for protection, sanctification and unity of Christians.

In John chapter 17, Jesus prays for his disciples. He prays, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.” Everything in the world is not bad. The whole earth is under the sovereign control of God. However, not everyone living on the earth recognises God’s sovereignty. Many people don’t know that God is in control on the earth. Many other people are deliberately against God and promote evil on the earth. Likewise the devil and all his evil spirits are against God on the earth. Jesus is for the earth, which he created, and he desires to protect his people on earth. And because he wants to win the people on earth through Christians, he does not take the Christians out of this world. Jesus prays for the protection of his people against the devil, against all evil spirits and against the wicked people living in this world.

Jesus continues to pray, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is the truth.” Because we have all sinned, we need to be sanctified. Salvation has a beginning, an ongoing process and an end. Salvation begins when we believe in Jesus Christ. Then God justifies us. Thereafter, through the work of the Holy Spirit living in us, we are saved every day from sinful thoughts, words and habits. This ongoing salvation is called “sanctification”. At the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, he will save us from the presence of sin, from death and from all evil powers. But how does God sanctify believers? Jesus says that God sanctifies us through the truth written in his word. Jesus is praying that we will read, believe and obey the Bible.

Finally, Jesus prays, “My prayer is that all of them may be one.” The unity of Christians all over the world does not have to be organisationally, but must be visible. In this way, all the people in the world will believe that God sent Jesus. Christian unity is made visible through loving each other. Whenever Christians meet one another in their own town or internationally, other people should recognise that they belong to Jesus Christ by their love for one another. Christian unity cannot be based on human agreements, but should always be based on the truth of the Bible. Christians, who study the Bible together and pray together, will love one another. Thus, you too should pray for the protection, sanctification and unity of your brothers and sisters.

Second. Pray for the continual strengthening of Christians.

Let us read Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians It has two parts. In Ephesians 1:17-19, Paul says, “I keep asking God ... that may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better, ... know the hope to which he has called you, ... and know his incomparable great power...” Paul is praying that the Ephesian Christians may be strengthened in what they already possess. They already possess the Holy Spirit (verse 13), as well as knowledge, hope and power. However, the work that God has begun in them must be carried on to completion (Philippians 1:6) and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, like love, wisdom, knowledge and power together with other graces of the Holy Spirit should be “more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:10). Paul is praying that the Christians may have “clear knowledge”, that is, a deeper understanding of the gospel and a clearer insight into God’s will and way for their lives. He is also praying for “wisdom”, that is, that at all times the Christians may know the best means to attain the highest goals.

In Ephesians 3:14-21, Paul says, “I pray that ... God may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you ... may grasp the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, ... that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” “Christ living in our hearts” is the same as “the Holy Spirit living in our inner being”. Christ in us, or the Holy Spirit in us, strengthens us with power, graces us with his love and transforms us more and more into the image of God. Our faith is the hand that receives all these wonderful things from Christ. Paul is praying what he says in Philippians 2:12-13. By your faith and your obedience “continue to work out your salvation ..., for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

You too should pray that your brothers and sisters continually grow stronger in the Holy Spirit and in the graces of the Holy Spirit.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Make a list of people God wants you to pray for. Think of your Christian brothers and sisters, especially those who need to grow and those who suffer. Think of Christian workers. Think of your family members, neighbours and colleagues. Think of people in authority and your enemies. Pray for them regularly.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.