

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 third series of 6 teachings is about “The prayers of people in the Bible”. We will learn from the prayers of different kind of followers of the Living God and the topics are: “Prayers in the Psalms”, “Prayers of the prophets in the Bible” and “Prayers of the statesmen in the Bible”. Every topic will be in two parts.

Today we will learn about “A DISCIPLE USES THE PRAYERS IN THE PSALMS - PART 2”. In part 1 we learned from prayers that focused on relating to God and from prayers that focused on yourself. In part 2 we will learn from more prayers that focus on yourself and from prayers that focus on other people.

The Psalms is the largest collection of biblical poetry. Biblical poetry is a means of expression of the deepest and highest thoughts and feelings of the human heart. The source of this poetry is a heart that is hungry for God. The object of this poetry is God. The theme of this poetry is the personal encounter with the living God. The word “psalm” literally means “a song of praise”. In the Psalms the poets give expression to their experiences and emotions of sorrow and joy, fear and hope, bitter disappointment and glowing expectation, puzzling questions and childlike trust. They express their innermost thoughts and feelings and lift up their hearts to God.

The Psalms speak to our hearts in a very special way, because we can identify with their experiences, thoughts and feelings. By reading, praying or singing the Psalms, we too can give expression to our deepest thoughts and feelings, we can fellowship with God and we can learn more about God. In this study we will consider how to use the Psalms in our prayers. The prayers in the Psalms may be divided into three parts: prayers that focus on God, prayers that focus on yourself and prayers that focus on other people.

POINT 2 continued. PRAYERS THAT FOCUS ON YOURSELF.

Third. Prayers of help against enemies.

Psalm 64 is a “prayer of help against the enemy”. David had many enemies. At times when his enemies persecuted David, he suffered at their hands. He prays for protection, “Protect my life from the threat of the enemy. Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from that noisy crowd of evildoers” (1-2).

In Psalm 32 he prays for deliverance, “Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue. ... Free me from the trap that is set before me (2-4). Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed with anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak. Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbours; I am a dread to my friends - those who see me on the street flee from me. I am forgotten by them as though I were dead; I have become like broken pottery. For I hear the slander of many; there is terror on every side; they conspire against me and plot to take my life... My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love. Let me not be put to shame” (9-17).

When you face enemies who persecute you, then pray a prayer of help against the enemy. Use these prayers in the Psalms to express your fear and distress. Remember, also your times are in the hands of God. Also you will later say with the writer, “How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow ... on those who take refuge in you. In the shelter of your presence you hide them from the intrigues of men; in your dwelling you keep them safe from accusing tongues” (verse 19-20).

Fourth. Prayers of examination.

Psalm 139 is a “prayer of examination”. David realises that he is neither perfect nor sinless, but he does not always know what things in his life displeases God. So he prays, “O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord. ... Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ... Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (1-7,23-24).

Psalm 17 and 26 are also prayers of examination.

When you know or feel that your life is not right, then pray a prayer of examination. Use this prayer in the Psalms to ask God to search your hidden motives and to test your deepest feelings. Ask God to uncover your fears, your hurts and your offensive behaviour. God already knows what is hidden in your mind and heart, but he wants you to ask him to show it to you. Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Even the truth about the darkest side of your nature can set you free!

Fifth. Prayers of surrender.

Psalm 56 is a "prayer of surrender". David experienced the attacks of his enemies and says, "Men hotly pursue me; all day long they press their attack. My slanderers pursue me all day long. ... All day long they twist my words; they are always plotting to harm me. They conspire, they lurk, they watch my steps, eager to take my life" (1-2,5-6). But in the face of these difficulties, David surrenders himself to God and expresses his trust in God. He prays, "In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?" (4,11).

In Psalm 123 the writer prays, "We have endured much ridicule from the proud, much contempt from the arrogant." But "our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he shows us his mercy" (4,2).

When you face difficult circumstances, you may be inclined to resent them and blame God for them, but then you should pray a prayer of surrender. Use these prayers in the Psalms to express your trust in God's sovereign will and power to work all things for good in your life.

Sixth. Prayers of change.

Psalm 51 is a "prayer of change". David had lived in sin, confessed his sin and longed to be transformed. He prays, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (10-12). In Psalm 86 he prays, "Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name" (11).

In Psalm 119 he prays, "Turn my heart towards your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word" (36-37).

And in Psalm 141 he prays, "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips. Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers;" (3-4).

When you desire to change, then pray a prayer of change. Use these prayers in the Psalms to express your desire to live a clean, sincere, unselfish and worthwhile life in the presence of God.

Seventh. Prayers of healing.

Psalm 30 is a "prayer of healing". Like many people, David experienced serious sickness and the threat of dying. He prays, "To you, O Lord I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy: What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?" (8-9). And after God healed him, he prays, "O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me. O Lord, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit." (2-3).

In Psalm 41 he expresses his faith in God's help in sickness, "The Lord will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness" (3).

When you are sick, then pray a prayer of healing. Use these prayers in the Psalms to express your fear of death as well as your faith in God's help in sickness.

Eighth. Prayers of guidance.

Psalm 143 is a "prayer of guidance". Everybody needs guidance! Here David asks for guidance concerning the way he should go. He prays, "Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. Rescue me from my enemies, O Lord, for I hide myself in you. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground" (8-10). In Psalm 119 the writer prays concerning understanding the words of God. He prays, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."

When you need guidance for the direction of your life, or guidance about what you should do in difficult times, or guidance about understanding God's word, then pray a prayer of guidance. Use these prayers in the Psalms to express

your desire to know what God wants you to do. Then you too will experience what God said in Psalm 32:8, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.” Christians, who ask God the way he wants them to go, will find the way God wants them to go!

Ninth. Prayers of trust.

Psalm 23 is a “prayer of trust”. David expresses his trust in God as his shepherd. He prays, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want (1).” He trusts that God will lead him into situations that are best for him; that God will guide him in the ways of righteousness; that God will be with him even in the most difficult situations; and that God will vindicate him before those who persecute him.

In Psalm 138 he expresses his trust that God will fulfil his sovereign plan with him. He prays, “The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me;” He will not abandon the works of his hands (8).

And in Psalm 56 he expresses his trust that God will protect him from the plots of evil people. He prays, “In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?” (4).

When you pray, you don’t always have to ask God for things. You may also express your trust, love and commitment to him. Therefore, often include in your prayers, prayers of trust, prayers of love and prayers of commitment.

POINT 3. PRAYERS THAT FOCUS ON OTHERS

The writers of the Bible sometimes prayed a blessing for other people and sometimes they called down God’s judgement on their enemies. The New Testament also has wonderful prayers you could use to intercede for others. Let us consider some prayers in the Psalms you could use when you pray for others.

First. Prayers of blessing.

Psalm 20 is a “prayer of blessing”. David blesses others and prays, “May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may God ... protect you. May he send you help ... and grant you support ... May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. ... May the Lord grant all your requests” (1-5).

In Psalm 5 he blesses those who love God and seek their refuge in him, “Let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you” (11).

In Psalm 112 he blesses those who fear God and are righteous, “Blessed the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands. ... Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. ... Surely he will never be shaken. ... He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord” (1,5-6).

When you want to bless somebody else, you could pray a prayer of blessing. Use these prayers in the Psalms to bless others. These blessings, of course, are rooted in trusting God. In verse Psalm 20:7 we read, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.” The implication is that also the receivers of these blessings are believers in God. They too should expect God to answer their requests and give success to their plans.

Second. Prayers of calling down God’s judgement.

Psalm 55 and 94 are “prayers of calling down God’s judgement”. The writer sees great injustice on earth and he prays, “Confuse the wicked, O Lord, confound their speech, for I see violence and strife in the city” (55:9). He also prays, “O Lord, the God who avenges, shine forth. Rise up, O Judge of the earth; pay back to the proud what they deserve. ... They crush your people, O Lord; they oppress your inheritance. They slay the widow and the alien; they murder the fatherless. They say, ‘The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob pays no heed.’ Take heed, you senseless ones among the people; you fools, when will you become wise? Does he who implanted the ear not hear? Does he who formed the eye not see? Does he who disciplines nations not punish? Does he who teaches man lack knowledge? The Lord knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile” (94:1-2, 5-11).

When you see gross injustice done to the weak and oppressed, then use these prayers in the Psalms to express your indignation at the injustice of the wicked people, the immorality of the perverse people and the oppression of people in authority. When you see how wicked people use violence and strife to further their plans, then you could pray, “Lord, confuse the wicked.” When you hear the liars misuse the radio, TV and newspapers for their own ends, you could pray, “Lord, confound their speech.” When you read how the proud and selfish rulers of the earth kill the poor and helpless people, how the drug cartels spread their poison to unsuspecting children, how the business Mafia gun down honest

businessmen, how warlords spread war to one country after the other, then you must pray and you may use these prayers in the Psalms to pray against these evil people. Christians believe that God is the sovereign and moral ruler of the world. Right and wrong are very meaningful to God and therefore, besides grace, judgement must operate in the moral world. Therefore Christians pray for evil people that they may turn from their evil to God and receive God's grace. However, if they refuse to repent and continue with their evil, then Christians pray that God may intervene and stop them with his judgements.

Conclusion. Use the prayers in the book of the Psalms as your own prayers. Use them to express your own thoughts and feelings. Use the requests of these Bible writers to make your own requests to God.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, each day pray one of the Psalms as your own prayer to God.

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".