

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Living in the Spirit

Lesson 7: Praying in the Spirit

Bible Text

Romans 8:26-27

Memory Verse

“Never stop praying.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Word List

filter: (noun) a device used to keep something unwanted from passing through

filter: (verb) to pass something through a filter to remove something unwanted

idiom: a saying that cannot be understood from the meanings of its separate words but that has a separate meaning of its own

intercede: to make a request on behalf of others

My husband “cannot carry a tune in a bucket.” This saying is an **idiom** that means that he cannot sing the melody of a song. His voice wanders onto the wrong notes or off key. He is aware of this weakness. Sometimes in church he just listens while others sing. But there are times when he sings along very quietly so no one can hear him. He says that there is a **filter** between heaven and earth. His

poor singing passes through that filter to sound beautiful to the Father’s ears in heaven.

Prayer is like that. Many of us feel that we do not know how to pray. We feel helpless to say the right things. Maybe we feel like God already knows, and our words are unnecessary. But there is a filter that all our prayers pass through. The Holy Spirit helps us pray. He searches our hearts to make it clear in heaven what we need or want. He helps us to understand God’s heart.

We Are Weak, But He Is Strong

(Romans 8:26)

26 In the same way, the Holy Spirit helps us where we are weak. We do not know how to pray or what we should pray for, but the Holy Spirit prays to God for us with sounds that cannot be put into words.

Once again, we start reading in the middle of Paul’s thought. He says, “In the same way...” In the same way as what? In Romans 8:20, Paul said that “Everything that has been made in the world is weak. It is not that the world wanted it to be that way. God allowed it to be that way. Yet there is hope.”

All of creation is weak. Paul includes himself among weak people. We all struggle with prayer. It seems hard to know exactly how to pray. We think about wrong things or pray in ways that do not fit with our Father’s

will. Many of us only pray when something really bad happens. We try to handle our lives on our own. When something bad happens, we realize that we need God to help us. The Holy Spirit is right there to help us when we are weak. When we do not know how to pray, He does. When we do not have the right words, He sighs or groans or cries for us so the Father understands.

First John 5:14-15 tells us, “We are sure that if we ask anything that He wants us to have, He will hear us. If we are sure He hears us when we ask, we can be sure He will give us what we ask for.”

God wants us to pray. He wants to hear our feelings, our needs, and our requests. But some people say that these verses mean that God should give us *anything* we ask for. Others say that our prayers are not answered like we want because we do not pray right. They say that there are special things we should do or say to have our prayers answered as we want. Then there are those who give up on prayer. They say that it is too hard to understand what our Father wants. So, they just stop praying completely.

Sometimes when we pray, we just get it wrong. We pray for something that is not what God wants at all. Paul had that happen in his life one time. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, Paul wrote that Satan had given him trouble

in his body. We do not know what that trouble was, but Paul wanted it to go away. So, he prayed three times for God to take it away. But God did not remove the trouble.

We have all had times when we prayed for something that seemed like the right way to solve our problem. But God did not answer our prayer the way we wanted. God told Paul, “I am all you need. I give you My loving-favor. My power works best in weak people” (2 Corinthians 12:9). The Holy Spirit helped Paul understand God’s heart. Then Paul was happy to be weak so that God could show His strength.

Then there are times in life that are so difficult that we cannot pray. Our hearts may be broken. Our bodies may be in such pain that we cannot think of what to pray. Maybe things are happening in our world that we do not understand. The Holy Spirit **intercedes** for us. He searches our hearts and tells God what we need. The Holy Spirit uses “sounds that cannot be put into words.” This might be a sigh or a groan or a cry.

Once, I heard my friend sit down and sigh very deeply. I could tell that something was wrong, but I did not know what it was. So, I asked, “What’s wrong?” She sighed, “Oh, nothing.” I knew that was not true. Something was wrong, but she could not put it into words. I could not “read her mind” or understand her heart. But God can.

God Knows Our Hearts

(Romans 8:27)

27 God knows the hearts of men. He knows what the Holy Spirit is thinking. The Holy Spirit prays for those who belong to Christ the way God wants Him to pray.

The Holy Spirit does not have my weakness to understand. He searches our hearts and takes our needs right to the Father who understands. He intercedes on our behalf with sounds that do not need language.

Psalm 139:1-6 gives a beautiful picture of how well God knows us. He knows our words before they are fully formed. God knows what we need even when we cannot put it into words. The Holy Spirit knows the heart of God. He shares the loving heart of God with us. He also searches our hearts and shares our needs and desires with God. He always filters our prayers to make them fit with the will of the Father.

Things to Think About

1. What makes prayer hard for you?
2. What steps will you take to make your prayer life stronger?
3. Have you ever been in such a stressful place that you could not find the words to pray?
4. Whose life can you bless by being faithful to pray for them?
5. Imagine what God could do in our world if we were faithful to pray.

Things to Remember

It is important to notice that the Holy Spirit only works on behalf of believers. Those who do not believe that God is their Father do not have this gift of the Holy Spirit's help.

This wonderful help only happens when believers pray. God never comes into our lives uninvited. He waits for us to ask, even if our prayer is only, "God, help me." We must not give up just because we do not know how to pray. We must not stop praying if we do not get the answers we want. We can trust our loving Father to do what is best for us. God hears all of our prayers, but He is the Lord. And He always answers us out of His great love for us.

Steps to a Better Prayer Life

- Pray Scripture back to God. See the model prayer of Jesus in Matthew 6:9-13, prayers of Paul in Ephesians 1:15-23, Ephesians 3:14-21 and Philippians 1:9-11, and the prayers of David in Psalm 103:1-5, and Psalm 104:1-2.
- Set aside a time and place where you can pray and not be bothered.
- Never stop praying. If you stop, start again!
- Pray as you walk. Pray for your city and your neighborhood.
- Pray as you drive. Pray for others on the road with you.

Romans 8:26-27

26 In the same way, the Holy Spirit helps us where we are weak. We do not know how to pray or what we should pray for, but the Holy Spirit prays to God for us with sounds that cannot be put into words.

27 God knows the hearts of men. He knows what the Holy Spirit is thinking. The Holy Spirit prays for those who belong to Christ the way God wants Him to pray.

Romans 8:20

20 Everything that has been made in the world is weak. It is not that the world wanted it to be that way. God allowed it to be that way. Yet there is hope.

1 John 5:14-15

14 We are sure that if we ask anything that He wants us to have, He will hear us.

15 If we are sure He hears us when we ask, we can be sure He will give us what we ask for.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9

7 The things God showed me were so great. But to keep me from being too full of pride because of seeing these things, I have been given trouble in my body. It was sent from Satan to hurt me. It keeps me from being proud.

8 I asked the Lord three times to take it away from me.

9 He answered me, "I am all you need. I give you My loving-favor. My power works best in weak people." I am happy to be weak and have troubles so I can have Christ's power in me.

Psalms 139:1-6

1 O Lord, you have looked through me and have known me.

2 You know when I sit down and when I get up. You understand my thoughts from far away.

3 You look over my path and my lying down. You know all my ways very well.

4 Even before I speak a word, O Lord, you know it all.

5 You have closed me in from behind and in front. And You have laid Your hand upon me.

6 All You know is too great for me. It is too much for me to understand.