

# connect360

BIBLE TEACHING GUIDE

# Prayer That Moves Heaven

POWER WITH PURPOSE

A STUDY OF PRAYER

Patrick Wilson  
Stephen Von Wyrick  
Robert Prince  
Jake Raabe  
Dennis Parrott



**GC2**  
PRESS

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*Prayer That Moves Heaven: Power With Purpose*  
*Connect 360 Bible Teaching Guide*

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# How to Make the Best Use of This *Teaching Guide*

Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This *Teaching Guide* has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

In each lesson, you will find first “Bible Comments” for teachers, to aid you in your study and preparation. The three sections of “Bible Comments” are “Understanding the Context,” “Interpreting the Scriptures,” and “Focusing on the Meaning.” “Understanding the Context” provides a summary overview of the entire background passage that also sets the passage in the context of the Bible book being studied. “Interpreting the Scriptures” provides verse-by-verse comments on the focal passage. “Focusing on the Meaning” offers help with the meaning and application of the focal text.

The second main part of each lesson is “Teaching Plans.” You’ll find two complete teaching plans in this section. The first is called the “Discovery Plan,” which emphasizes discovery learning techniques; and the second is called the “Discussion Plan,” which provides questions and suggestions for dialogue about the Scriptures. Choose the plan that best fits your class and your style of teaching. You may also use and adapt ideas from both. Each plan is intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach.

The major headings in each teaching plan are intended to help you sequence how you teach to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, “Connect With Life,” provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, “Guide Bible Study,” offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible’s message. The third major heading, “Encourage Application,” is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. You might use one or more of the following methods:

- In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents in their *Study Guides* and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
- If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
- Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from [www.gc2press.org](http://www.gc2press.org) under the “Teacher Helps” tab.
- Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

Here are some steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers meet for lesson overview and preparation, plan to participate. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers don’t have this planning time now, look for ways to begin. You, your fellow teachers, and your church will benefit from this mutual encouragement and preparation.
3. Overview the study in the *Study Guide*. Look at the table of contents and see where this lesson fits in the overall study. Then read or review the study introduction to the book that is being studied.
4. Consider carefully the suggested Main Idea, Question to Explore, and Teaching Aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.
5. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. Using your Bible in your study and in the class session can provide a positive model to class members to use their own Bibles

and give more attention to Bible study themselves. (Each writer of the Bible comments in both the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* has chosen a favorite translation. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translations chosen, of course.)

6. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible comments in the *Study Guide*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself. Continue your Bible study with the aid of the Bible comments included in this *Teaching Guide*.
7. Review the "Teaching Plans" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
8. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class and think about how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
9. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this *Teaching Guide*, with alterations as needed for your class.
10. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

**Teaching Resource Items.** These items are available for download for use in your class. These are available for \$10 at [www.gc2press.org](http://www.gc2press.org). Watch for them in the teaching plans for each lesson. These items are selected from the teaching plans. They are provided online to make lesson preparation easier for handouts and similar items. Permission is granted to download these teaching resource items, print them out, and copy them as needed for all classes within your church.

**Premium Commentary.** Plan to get the additional in-depth Bible Study comments available online. Visit our website, call 1-866-249-1799, or email [gc2press@txb.org](mailto:gc2press@txb.org) to order the *Premium Commentary*. It is available for \$20 in electronic format (PDF) from our website. Permission is granted to download this commentary, print it, and copy them as needed for all classes within your church.

## Writers for this *Teaching Guide*

**Patrick Wilson wrote the Bible Comments for lessons one through four.** Patrick is a graduate of Baylor University (B.A.), Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.A.Th. and Th.M.), and Logsdon Seminary (D.Min.). A native of Texas, he formerly pastored in Austin, and in the Dallas metroplex. In addition to pastoring, he has taught seminary courses in Old Testament, Hebrew, and pastoral ministry. Patrick lives in Rolla, Missouri, with his wife, Michelle, and his son, Joel.

**Stephen Von Wyrick wrote the Bible Comments for lessons five through seven.** Dr. Wyrick is a retired professor of Hebrew Bible and Archaeology at the University of Mary-Hardin Baylor in Belton, Texas and as a lecturer in religion at Baylor University. He has written numerous assignments in the past for GC2 Press and currently lives in Allen, Texas.

**Robert Prince wrote the Bible Comments for lessons eight through ten.** Robert serves as Lead Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Waynesville, North Carolina. Originally from Georgia, he received a B.A. from Baylor University. He has also received a M.Div. and a Ph.D. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. In addition to serving in pastorates in Texas and Georgia, he has taught on an adjunct basis for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and Wayland Baptist University.

**Jake Raabe wrote the Bible Comments for lessons eleven through thirteen.** Jake is a graduate of the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (B.A. Christian Studies and English) and George W. Truett Theological Seminary (M.Div.) and a freelance writer for various Baptist and evangelical publications as well as an editor, indexer, and writing tutor. He lives in Waco, Texas with his wife Rebekah and their daughter Elizabeth.

**Dennis Parrott wrote the Teaching Plans for lessons one through thirteen.** Dennis has written Teaching Plans for GC2 Press for many years and has written several publications nationwide related to Adult Education. He has a Bachelor of Music Education from Baylor University and a Master of Arts from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dennis served five Texas churches as Minister of Education. He also served as Director of Bible Study and Discipleship and was the Team Lead for the Congregational Strategists for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Dennis lives in the Plano, Texas with his wife, Myra. They have two married children and four grandchildren.

# Prayer That Moves Heaven

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**GC2 Press®** will continue to publish the undated **CONNECT 360** quarterly Bible study curriculum. **Connect 360** has gained a reputation for solid biblical teaching and will continue to be published as an undated quarterly study available in book form and/or digital downloads. **Connect 360** is currently being distributed in 38 states and 16 countries and has been translated into seven different languages.

For more information, please go to our website at [www.gc2press.org](http://www.gc2press.org).



# lesson 1

## Battle Ready

### MAIN IDEA

Effective prayer is true, aggressive, warfare praying.

### QUESTION TO EXPLORE

Are all my prayers effective?

### TEACHING AIM

To challenge adults to understand that praying in the Spirit is prayer that listens



# Bible Comments

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## Understanding the Context

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### Introduction to Ephesians

Ephesus was one of the most significant cities of Asia during Roman times. The city strategically sat on both the major land and sea routes. Situated along the Aegean Sea coastline at the mouth of the Kaystros River, Ephesus was a major seaport of ancient Rome. By land, three major roads proceeded out of Ephesus: one eastward toward Babylon, another northward through Smyrna, and a third southward to the Meander Valley. Thus, Ephesus was a significant locale for commercial trade, cultural and religious interaction, and military presence.

In Paul's day, the city population was estimated at 200,000, making it the third largest city in the empire (behind only Rome and Alexandria). Within the city sat a magnificent amphitheater that held 25,000 people and was designed for theatrical performances and later gladiatorial contests. When Paul was accused of leading people away from the worship of Artemis (known to the Romans as Diana) and her temple, a mob led by the silversmith, Demetrius, gathered together in this theater (see Acts 19:23-41).

In addition to the worship of Artemis, Ephesus also housed temples to Zeus, Apollos, the goddess Roma, and the emperor, Augustus. The temple to Artemis, on the north-eastern edge of the city, is considered one of the ancient wonders of the world and was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens. Artemis was hailed as the "Queen of Heaven," and was worshiped as the goddess of the hunt, chastity, childbirth, wild animals, and the wilderness. The temple was later destroyed by the Goths in A.D. 262, leaving only one column and the foundation in ruins today.

To the believers in Ephesus, Paul wrote this letter in approximately A.D. 60. Paul's letter was most likely written from house arrest in Rome as he awaited trial before Caesar. Thus, it is oftentimes referred to as one of Paul's

prison epistles (along with Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon). Even in the midst of these uncertain times, Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus to encourage them to walk in faith, unite together, persevere amidst opposition, and to live for Christ.

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## Interpreting the Scriptures

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### The Armor of Prayer (6:17)

As Paul prepared to close out the final section of the letter, he focused on the need for awareness about spiritual warfare. As in all struggles of the Christian faith, it is important for us to remember that our true strength comes from the Lord and not from our own capabilities. We are to be “strong in the Lord” and to find this strength in the mighty power of God, alone (Ephesians 6:10). **Paul wanted his audience to be aware that our struggle is not against other people, even though we tend to see others as our enemies.** As followers of Jesus, our battle is against Satan and his spiritual forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12). Thus, Paul called us to stand up against these evil forces by putting on God’s armor and not our own.

The fullness of God’s armor is necessary to stand against the devil’s schemes. Peter likened Satan to a roaring lion seeking those that he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is on the offensive attack against God’s people to steal, kill, and destroy us (John 10:10). Yet, the Lord in us is greater than the enemy in the world (1 John 4:4). So, the Christ follower needs to suit up in the full armor of God to be able to extinguish the assault of the adversary.

Truth buckled around our waist as a belt provides stability for our faith. Righteousness as a breastplate protects our vital organs from a fatal blow. The gospel of peace compels our feet to go out into the world. Faith is like a shield that is our first line of defense against the flaming arrows of temptation hurled at us through the air. On top of these significant components of our protection, Paul listed two other essentials in verse 17: the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit.

Salvation is likened to a helmet that protects our face and mind. Most of our senses are on our faces (eyes to see, ears to hear, nose to smell, tongue to taste, and to a lesser extent, touch to feel). Through the five senses, information enters our minds. This information must be filtered so we do not become mentally fixated on things that are not of God. By evaluating what we watch, listen to, eat, breathe in, and touch, we are better aware of the influences in our lives. Thus, Paul told the Philippians that we need to think on things that are of God (Philippians 4:8). This is best accomplished by letting God and the truth of His Word be a gatekeeper on what we let into our minds. By experiencing the salvation of God on an ongoing basis, our minds become the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). We need the mind of Jesus to be able to distinguish the enemies' lies from the Lord's guidance, and the helmet is the armor of God that saves us so we can stand against the devil and his schemes to destroy us.

The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. As Jesus resisted Satan's temptation in the wilderness by quoting Scripture (Matthew 4:1-11), so we must hide God's Word in our hearts so we can counter the devil's attractions (Psalm 119:11). The more that we spend time in the Bible—reading it, hearing it, studying it, memorizing it, and meditating on it—the better prepared for battle we will be. The Word of God, sheathed in the belt of truth, is doubled-edged penetrating into the depths of our souls like a scalpel to remove sin and free us from the cancerous effects of the devil's schemes.

### **Praying in the Spirit (6:18)**

Having suited up with God's armor, we need to be careful to remember that the battle is not ours to fight. God is the victor, and our victory is won on our knees. Paul called us to prayer. We are to pray in communion between our spirit and the Spirit of God. Such prayer should not be exclusively at meal-times or before bed; instead, we are to pray on all occasions. We are never in a place where we are free from the temptations of the enemy. When we think we are not susceptible, we are most vulnerable.

In our readiness to stand against the devil's attacks, we pray with all kinds of prayers and requests. Sadly, too often our prayers are predominantly

supplications, requesting God to do our bidding. While it is valuable for us to share our hearts with God, prayer should be a time for us to hear from Him. When we pray, we need to adore God for who He is and celebrate His grace and blessings in our lives. We also need to confess who we are, acknowledging our sinfulness and dependence on the Lord's mercy. We should pray with thanksgiving for each day and whatever the day holds. We make our requests known to God, but we also harken to His requests of us.

As we pray for others, we remember that we all need the Lord. Praying for each other is a way we join in the spiritual warfare with our brothers and sisters in Christ. In the spiritual battlefield, we stand beside one another as we pray with each other and for each other. To be effective in our prayers for others, we need to be alert. By being emotionally intelligent and relationally astute, we can discern what is troubling in others' lives and how we can best pray for their welfare. Being battle ready means that we pray to our Commander and for each other as we go out into the spiritual battlefield against our true foe.

## Praying Specifically (6:19-20)

**6:19.** Specifically, Paul asked for prayer for himself. Sometimes, we think strong Christians do not need prayer as much as those that are struggling. We wrongly assume that because they are in church or even leading the church, they do not face challenges; just the opposite is the case. Yet, Paul did not ask for prayer to be released from prison or that he would be found innocent. Instead, he asked that the Ephesians pray for him that as he had opportunity to share the gospel that God would give him the right words to say. We all have divine opportunities to share about Jesus with others. Seizing these opportunities are vital if we are going to join with God in the evangelistic work of spreading the good news of Jesus.

Paul spoke of the gospel as a mystery. This may refer to the fact that many of those who heard Paul share about Jesus had never heard of Christ. It is mysterious how God would choose to love any of us and then demonstrate that love through the sacrificial death of His Son. The gospel is full of mystery, but it is not unsolvable. Rather, the mystery of the gospel is something we merely receive and accept, surrendering our lives to the Lord.

**6:20.** Paul acknowledged that he was in chains, which is a reference to being under house arrest. Yet, instead of speaking of himself as a prisoner in chains, he said he was actually an ambassador. An ambassador is one who represents a foreign kingdom. Paul was in Rome, the capitol city of the empire, but he represented the kingdom of God. He was an ambassador for King Jesus.

Paul reiterated his request for prayer that he might declare the gospel message fearlessly. Paul desired to use the opportunity before him to share his faith with everyone he came in contact with, even the emperor. He was willing to sacrifice everything to point others to Jesus and the goodness of God. If we are to be battle ready, we need to have such determination as we pray for one another and for the extension of the good news into the lives of others around us.

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### Focusing on the Meaning

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Being battle ready in prayer necessitates that we put on the full armor of God. We suit up for spiritual warfare because our battle is not against one another. As we join in the fight for the souls of people created and loved by God, we fill our minds with the things of God and His Word. We pray in the Spirit with all kinds of prayers. We earnestly lift up each other that we may be fearless and faithful to share about the mystery of God's incredible love for us. We eagerly pray for unbelievers that they may have softened hearts to receive the gospel message and to embrace the love of Jesus. We serve as the ambassadors of Christ in the world so Jesus may advance His kingdom on earth and be glorified in all things. The victory is already won, but the battle for the eternal destiny of souls wages on.

As you go out into the world this week, be prayerful. Ask God to show you opportunities to share about the hope you have in Christ. Pray for those around you to be receptive to God's call in their lives. Celebrate how God is moving in the world around you and give Him the glory for all He is doing. Our God is an awesome God!



# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Make copies of the following questionnaire and distribute to members:

#### Improving Your Prayer Life

1. How effective are my prayers?
2. How important is prayer to me?
3. Do I pray with confidence that God will hear my prayers?
4. Do my prayers include a time of praise to God?
5. How do I pray in faith?

Ask members to look over this questionnaire this week and determine a response to each question. Ask them to keep this questionnaire and their responses with them each week as we study Scripture related to each question.

(A copy of this assignment is available in “Teaching Resource Items” for this study at [www.gc2press.org](http://www.gc2press.org).)

2. Ask members to respond to the following statement: “We must get rid of the notion that prayer is a way God has given us of making Him work for us.” After a time of discussion share the following statement: “Prayer is God’s way of involving us in what He intends to do.”
3. Share with members that in this study we will gain a better understanding of how to listen to what God is saying to us. We will deal with the first question in our questionnaire, “How effective are my prayers?”

## Guide Bible Study

4. Following are four case studies related to the focal verses for this study. Read each case study and then ask members to determine how the related verse can help this person pray effectively regarding the struggle they are experiencing. You can divide the class into four groups for this study or keep the class together for each case study.
  - a. Fred is experiencing what he thinks to be an attack by Satan in his life. Fred is desperately trying to stay faithful to what he thinks God would have him do but the struggle doesn't go away. The struggle has to do with one of his co-workers (a female) who has become a close friend—too close. Fred is married and wants to stay faithful to his wife. What can he do to win this battle against the Devil? (After reading the case study read Ephesians 6:17, and ask the class, “How can this verse help Fred with his struggle?”) Refer to the *Study Guide* for related commentary for each of these verses.
  - b. Susan is finding it difficult to find time to pray on a regular basis. She has tried getting up early in the mornings to pray but allows the pressure of getting ready for the day to crowd out her prayer time. When she does pray, Susan finds her mind wandering to so many things that have nothing to do with what she is praying. How can she make prayer a more important part of her everyday life? (Then read Ephesians 6:18a and ask the class to discuss how this verse can help Susan with her struggle.)
  - c. Sam has found that his prayers are becoming more and more about himself and those closest to him. Is it wrong that his prayers have become so narrow in their focus? What can he do to broaden the scope of his prayers? (Then read Ephesians 6:18b and lead the class in a time of discussion related to Sam's dilemma.)
  - d. Mary is reluctant to ask people to pray for her. She has a number of needs including difficulties at work and ailing parents. Mary finds herself never responding to times of prayer request in her Bible study class. She is convinced that others have much greater needs than

hers and she doesn't want to bring attention to herself. (Then read Ephesians 6:19-20 and ask members to discuss how these verses can help Mary with her misgivings about asking for others' prayers.)

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at [www.gc2press.org](http://www.gc2press.org).)

## Encourage Application

5. Remind members of the question from the beginning of this study, "How effective are my prayers?" Ask members to share some ways they have discovered in this study that can improve the effectiveness of their prayer life.
6. Then ask members to divide into groups of two and discuss this question, *How can I make listening to God more important in my prayer life?* (Refer to the sidebar, "Talking With and Listening to God," in the *Study Guide*.)

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Ask members to share what they need most from this study of prayer? Write their responses on a marker board. Share the questions from the questionnaire in the Discovery Plan to serve as an overview of this study.
2. Share the following from the introductory material: "*Some people treat God as a heavenly bellboy; that when we push the prayer button He is to show up and take orders for what we want Him to do.*" Ask members to share why this approach to prayer can never make us effective prayer warriors. Our study for today will help us pray more effectively.

## Guide Bible Study

3. Share with members that in this study we will discover four guidelines for effective prayer and how these relate to our lives. Read the following verses and ask members to identify the guidelines in each verse:
  - a. **Ephesians 6:17.** A suggested guideline is “Prayer should be considered as an effective weapon against the temptations of Satan in our lives.” Christians will always have to do battle with the powers of darkness in this life. God has prepared each of us with the necessary weapons and armor to resist the devil. These include our salvation experience and the Word of God. We are to be girded with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the Sword of God’s Word.
  - b. **Ephesians 6:18a.** A suggested guideline is “Pray in the Spirit at all times during the day.” “Praying in the Spirit is prayer that listens.” Praying in the Spirit means we are to ask the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts and help us remain sensitive to opportunities to pray throughout the day. Quick, one-sentence prayers when needed are very effective. The Holy Spirit will help us live a life that becomes a prayer for those around us. Prayer can become our first response to every situation we face. (Refer to the sidebar, “Talking With and Listening to God,” in the *Study Guide*.)
  - c. **Ephesians 6:18b.** A suggested guideline is “We are to be persistent in our prayers for all believers.” Paul said we are to stay alert to those who need our prayers that are beyond our inner circle. Our prayers should include all Christians in our community and around the world. This should lead us to read about various Christian endeavors and to determine a response to these needs that will include prayer and financial support.
  - d. **Ephesians 6:19-20.** A suggested guideline is “Never feel reluctant to share your prayer needs with other Christians.” Paul was never shy about asking for the prayers of others. He needed the prayers of the Christian community to help him remain bold in his preaching and

witnessing, especially during his times of imprisonment. We should realize that God's plan for our lives includes the support of prayer partners in our Christian fellowship.

### **Encourage Application**

4. Ask members to select one of the guidelines just discussed and determine how they will apply this guideline to their prayer time this week. Ask some to share their thoughts.
5. Close with a time of silent prayer and ask members to focus more on listening to what God is saying to them rather than what they are saying to Him.