



NEW CROSSING CHURCH

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Prayer Series: Upward. Inward. Outward

Study 10: Praying the Bible

Note: You can listen to or watch the sermon of the same title, Gill Robertson, Mar 20, 2022

Introduction

Do you tend to find it easier to read and study the Bible or to pray? How does reading the Bible influence your prayer life and how does prayer influence your reading of the Bible?

Why Pray the Bible? (Use this section for review or skip it!)

There are many reasons why it is helpful to use the Bible in various ways as we pray.

1. The Bible helps us learn to speak God's language - just as babies learn to talk by imitating adults, we learn to speak God's language by reading his Word.
2. God's words are powerful (Genesis 1; Psalm 33: 6-9; Isaiah 40:9). God said, *Let there be And it was so.* God simply spoke the universe into being - those are powerful words!
3. Scripture helps us pray creatively. We easily get stuck in prayer ruts, praying for the same things, using the same words and phrases. Using a variety of scriptures to guide our prayers helps us pray in new ways.
4. The Bible helps align our prayers with God's heart (John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23; Isaiah 55:9) The Bible guides us to:
 - Know God more and worship him as he deserves (Upward)
 - Be honest in bringing our concerns to God and in asking him to speak into our lives (Inward)
 - Care about and pray for the things that God cares for (Outward)
5. The Bible helps transform us as we submit to it in prayer (2 Timothy 3:14-17). As we read the Bible prayerfully, we invite God to make us more like him!

Are any of these reasons particularly motivating for you?

Ways to Pray the Bible

A. Pray Bible prayers

- Are there any prayers recorded in the Bible that you like to pray, either verbatim or as a template for your prayers?
- Pray the Lord's Prayer together out loud (Matthew 6:9-13). You could agree to say "thy" or "your" and "sins," "trespasses," or "debts." (Or don't worry about it - God will still hear your prayer!)
- Which parts of this famous prayer help you pray Upward, Inward, and Outward?

B. Recite scripture prayerfully

Reciting portions of scripture over and over prayerfully helps us experience the truth more deeply. We may know truth with our heads, but prayerful recitation helps us know it in our souls and begins to influence how we think, speak, and act.

- Take a few minutes to each recite 1 John 1:9 several times at your own pace. (The leader will stop you after about 10 times.)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- Share anything you experienced or met with God through this practice.

C. Ask God for specific verses for specific people or situations

- Do you have any examples of verses you have felt led to pray for specific people or over particular situations?

D. Use any passage to guide your prayers Upward, Inward, and Outward

Practice your Upward, Inward, and Outward prayers using either Romans 5:1-5 or Ephesians 2:8-10.

Challenge your thinking by taking time to pray in each direction: pray upward as a group first; then inward; then outward. The questions below may help guide your prayers.

1. Upward Prayer

What am I learning about God?

How have I experienced God in these ways?

- God, I praise you that you are _____. I have seen you be _____ when _____.
- Lord, thank you for _____. Thank you for _____ in my life.
- Lord, you hate _____. Thank you for sharing your heart with me. I lament _____ with you.

2. Inward Prayer

What am I learning about myself, those close to me, and my church?

- Lord, what do you want me to ask for me, for us?
- Lord, what do you want me to confess and repent from?
- Lord, what do you want to show me or say to me?

3. Outward Prayer

How does this passage challenge me to intercede for other?

- Prayer for BOB (Burden, Opportunities, and Boldness)
- Lord, who are you calling me to pray for?
- Lord, what specifically do you want me to pray and do?

E. Lectio Divina

Practice Lectio Divina the same passage .

Use the same passage you used for your Upward, Inward, and Outward prayers together.

The ancient Christian practice meeting God through slow reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating of the Bible. Allow for moments of silence after each reading of scriptures. After the silence, share briefly what God is showing you.

1. **Read (*Lectio*)** – Slowly and prayerfully read a small portion of scripture. As you do allow yourself to come into the presence of God. Listen for the Holy Spirit to catch your attention with a word or phrase that “stops” you...that gets your attention...that “summons” you.

Question: Lord, what word or phrase are you wanting to speak to me and grab my attention?

Temptation: to go beyond simple listening and trying to figure out why the word or passage holds meaning to me.

2. **Meditate (*Meditatio*)** – Read your passage slowly again and consider how the word/phrase is speaking to your life. Allow it to interact and work with your reason, imagination, memory, hopes, desires, or emotions.

Question: Where is this passage speaking into my life/soul? How is my heart responding to this word/phrase?

Temptation: to go beyond where the word connects to my soul and try to figure out what I am supposed to do.

Note: If reading a story ask, “Where am I in this scene and what do I hear in the words addressed to me?”

3. **Pray (*Oratio*)** – Read the passage once more, and offer your own prayerful **response** to what you hear God speaking to you. Prayer is engaging God, even if it is a quarrel or wrestling match, knowing that he loves you and accepts you.

- The Lord listens and speaks in return with gentle whispers.
- Is there an invitation from God in this passage?

Response: “Lord, what do you want me to do today/this week with what you are showing me?”

4. **Contemplate (*Contemplatio*)** – A time to reflect more deeply and enjoy God’s presence. In your contemplation, listen for anything else the Lord may want to speak or show you.

- Be receptive to how God wants to bring his presence into your situation. Close with prayers for yourself and others.