

Worship-based Prayer

Lesson 1 - The Importance of Prayer in the Local Church

I would like to welcome you to our GTN course entitled *Worship-based Prayer: Everything Changes When You Seek God's Face*.

As we begin, I would like to emphasize two things.

First, when we train, we always look to train to the head, the heart, and the hands.

When we think of the head, we think of information. We take in biblical truth, and that's important, but if training stops here, it has fallen short. Biblical truth should impact us in some way.

It should inspire us. It should impact our heart. There are things that we will come to believe in a deeper way.

We call that inspiration, but if training stops there with just feeling a sense that this is true and we have a commitment to it, if it stops there, it has fallen short as well. Training really has fulfilled its objective when it transforms our lives. This is what we refer to as when we say training impacts our hands.

Things that we know to be true that have impacted us and inspired us to believe in a deeper way should be lived out. We should put these truths into practice in our lives. The desired outcome for any spiritual training is spiritual transformation.

The goal is to be transformed into the likeness of Christ through the Word of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of God, in community with other believers for the glory of God. So, we will always stay focused on training our head, our heart, and our hands.

Second, we remind our learners of the GTN vision summarized in 2 Timothy 2:2. The Apostle Paul said to Timothy, a young pastor in the city of Ephesus, take the things that I've taught you and then teach them to other reliable people who could teach other reliable people and so on.

In that verse, there are four generations that are presented. The idea is to teach others who can teach others who can teach others who can teach others. It is the idea of spiritual multiplication.

The things that you are learning in any of the courses that we teach are not just meant for yourselves. As pastors and leaders, you are to take this training, make it your own, and then teach them within your congregation. You may find other pastors who have not been through this training.

You focus on teaching other leaders who can then teach others as the impact will be multiplied across the kingdom of God.

Each course in our GTN core curriculum of biblical and theological training will be recorded in English, French, Wolof, and Sereer. There are transcripts of each audio lesson in English, French and Wolof. Finally, you will find handouts for each course translated in English, French and Sereer. As we begin Lesson one of Worship-based prayer, be sure you have the appropriate copy of the transcript for this lesson (and each subsequent lesson) along with the training handout for this course. Please pause the audio recording at this time to secure the supporting transcript and handout before continuing. This will enhance your learning experience.

Pause audio recording now to get the transcript and handout for this lesson and course.

As we begin this course, please turn to page two. Look at the table of contents.

Turn to page two for a summary of the seven lessons for Worship-based prayer. Each lesson has its own audio recording and transcript. There is also an appendix filled with wonderful materials that will help you provide others with a sound theology of prayer along with a biblical model for praying that honors God and will transform their life.

At the top of page 2, I reference two books written by Daniel Henderson, who is the leader of *Strategic Renewal Ministries*. Daniel has been a mentor of mine in prayer for many years. The two books are:

- *Transforming Prayer: How Everything Changes When You Seek God's Face*
- *Fresh Encounters: Experiencing Transformation Through United Worship-Based Prayer.*

I have incorporated key principles from these two books into this training. You will find everything based on Scripture. My desire is to provide simple and helpful illustrations to grasp what God teaches us in His Word related to prayer so that these can be applied in your personal prayer life and the prayer culture of your church.

Turn with me to page 3 as we begin Lesson 1. This lesson is called, *The Importance of Prayer in the Local Church*.

I will begin by asking a few questions for you to reflect on. As I ask each question, take a moment to reflect on how you might respond.

Question #1: Who taught you to pray?

Questions #2: Are you following a biblical model for prayer or just following what someone else was doing?

This can happen often in life. We may not know why we do the things we do. We have just watched other people. Maybe it was a pastor. Maybe it was just the norm within the church you were attending. Maybe it was a parent or someone who disciplined you. Without much explanation, you began to follow what they were doing without ever wondering, is it based on a biblical model? Is it sound? Are you following a biblical model for prayer or just following what someone else might have been doing?

Question #3: Do you feel like you know how to pray effectively?

If you answered yes, how might you describe what “effective prayer” includes? What are the hinderances, based on the Bible, to effective prayer?

Question #4: Do you feel like you are equipped to teach someone else to pray effectively?

It is one thing to feel like you have a good understanding of how to pray in a biblical way. But if you had to teach someone else, that is much more challenging. Teaching someone else will always help us learn and grow in deeper ways.

Question #5: Would you like to grow in your prayer life?

Are you satisfied with your prayer life? Is prayer one of the spiritual disciplines where you would like to develop?

Sometimes we need to unlearn certain principles, methods, and teachings before we can begin to learn new approaches.

We get so set in the things that we do, and we may not be clear on why we do what we do. In this course, you will hear some things that you already know and may practice daily. There may also be some other principles that may be new for you. I just ask that as you listen and work your way through this training, allow the Holy Spirit to reveal principles from the Word of God related to prayer. At the end of the course, you will be able to assimilate the biblical principles that will help you grow in your relationship with God through worship-based prayer as you seek God’s face not just His hand. I will explain this concept of “seeking God’s face and not just His hand” in a future lesson.

There are at least three high-level objectives for this course.

1. Identify the importance of prayer in the local church and in your own personal prayer life.
2. Develop a sound biblical theology of prayer.
3. Develop a biblical model for prayer that’s both God-honoring and life-changing.

As we get started, there is an activity at the bottom of page 3. We will start by reading Psalm 103. Using the chart on page 3, write down the attributes of God, characteristics of God, and names of God that you see in Psalm 103. You will need something to write with for this activity.

At this point, please pause the audio and use the chart here to go back verse by verse to write down the attributes of God, characteristics of God, and names of God that you see in Psalm 103. Take your time. Worship the Lord for who He is as you complete this activity. When you restart the recording, we will review Psalm 103 together and I will explain why I have chosen to start with this activity.

Welcome back.

You read Psalm 103. You completed the chart on page 3 where you listed the attributes of God, characteristics of God, names of God on a verse-by-verse basis. I have provided a copy of Psalm 103 below.

Psalm 103 *Of David.*

- ¹ Praise **the LORD**, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his **holy name**.
- ² Praise **the LORD**, my soul, and forget not all **his benefits**—
- ³ who **forgives** all your sins and **heals** all your diseases,
- ⁴ who **redeems** your life from the pit and crowns you with **love and compassion**,
- ⁵ who **satisfies** your desires with **good things** so that your youth is **renewed** like the eagle's.
- ⁶ The LORD works **righteousness and justice** for all the **oppressed**.
- ⁷ He **made known** his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel:
- ⁸ The LORD is **compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love**.
- ⁹ He will **not always accuse**, nor will he **harbor his anger forever**;
- ¹⁰ he **does not treat us as our sins deserve** or repay us according to our iniquities.
- ¹¹ For **as high as the heavens are above the earth**, so great is his **love** for those who fear him;
- ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he **removed our transgressions** from us.
- ¹³ As a **father** has **compassion** on his children, so the **LORD has compassion** on those who fear him;
- ¹⁴ for **he knows** how we are **formed**, he remembers that **we are dust**.
- ¹⁵ The **life of mortals** is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field;
- ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.
- ¹⁷ But from **everlasting to everlasting** the LORD's **love** is with those who fear him, and his **righteousness** with their children's children—
- ¹⁸ with those who **keep his covenant** and remember to **obey his precepts**.
- ¹⁹ The LORD has established his **throne** in heaven, and **his kingdom** rules over all.
- ²⁰ **Praise** the LORD, you **his angels**, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.
- ²¹ **Praise** the LORD, all **his heavenly hosts**, you **his servants** who do his will.
- ²² **Praise** the LORD, all **his works** everywhere in **his dominion**. **Praise** the LORD, my soul.

Let us do a quick verse-by-verse review of this Psalm and highlight your observations that reveal the character of God from this Psalm. I am sure that you may have observed things that I may not share.

Verse 1: God is the **LORD**. He is **Jehovah** or **Yahweh**. **The I Am**. The most personal name of God. This name of God is repeated throughout this Psalm. God is also **Holy**.

Verse 2: God is the **LORD**, **Yahweh**, the **I Am**. God is also a **Giver**. We have received benefits and blessings from Him.

Verse 3: God is **Forgiving/Merciful**. God is the **Healer**.

Verse 4: God is the **Redeemer**. God is **Love**. God is **Compassionate**.

Verse 5: God is our **Provider (Jehovah Jireh)**. He satisfies our needs. God is the giver of good things because He is good. God **Renews and Restores**.

Verse 6: God is **Righteous and Just**. God also Sees us (**El Roi**) in our oppression. He is concerned about us.

Verse 7: God is the **Revealer**. He made known His ways to Moses and to Israel.

Verse 8: God is **Compassionate, Gracious, Slow to Anger, abounding in Steadfast Love**.

Verse 9-10: God is **Merciful**. He does not deal with us as our sins deserve. Mercy is not receiving what we deserve from God. We deserve His wrath. He is merciful towards us.

Verse 11: God is **Great**. God is **Transcendent**. He is above us. As far as heavens are above the earth, He is beyond us, yet He is intimate as well. God is **Love**.

Verse 12: God makes **Atonement for sin**. God is **Forgiving**.

Verse 13: God is **Compassionate**. God is our **Father** who shows compassion on His children. So, the Lord shows compassion to those who fear Him. God is worthy to be **Revered** (feared).

Verse 14: God knows us. God is **All-Knowing**. God is **Omniscient**. God is the one who created us. God is **Creator**.

Verse 15-16: God is the **Giver of Life**. God is the **Author of Life**. God is **Eternal**. God is not mortal like we are. He is different from us. He is eternal. No beginning and no end.

Verse 17: God is **Eternal, from Everlasting to Everlasting**. God is **Love**. God is **Righteous**.

Verse 18: God is the **Law Giver**. God is to be **Obeded and to be Honored**. God is the one who established the law, established commandments. Thus, God is the one that we must obey.

Verse 19: God is **King**. God is **Sovereign**.

Verse 20-22: God is **Worthy of Praise**. God is the **Creator**. God is **Sovereign**. God is above all and even the angels respond to Him. Everything that is created is to bless the Lord, to praise the LORD.

How did you do? What else did you have on your list that I did not mention? We should take time right now to do what this Psalm instructs us to do. We must praise God for who He is in all of His glory and thank Him for all He has done for us.

Pause the audio recording now and take a few minutes to praise and thank God in specific ways using the word of Psalm 103 as your guide.

There are many Psalms that provide us with a picture of who God is. God has chosen, by His grace, to reveal Himself to us. He reveals Himself in creation. That is called General Revelation. Yet, through Special Revelation, through the Word of God, God has revealed Himself in a more intimate way. He has revealed greater detail about who He is, about the plan of salvation and how we can honor Him and live for Him and bring Him glory.

Why did I include this activity at the beginning of this course?

A central purpose of prayer is for each of us to be developing a relationship with God. Prayer is relational. Prayer is communicating with the God who created us to grow in relationship with Him, to love Him more. The content of our prayers should be based on the Word of God.

Worship-based prayer is scripture-fed. It is prayer that flows from the Bible. It is prayer that is led by and inspired through the Holy Spirit of God. It is prayer done in fellowship with other believers. It is prayer not focused on our own agenda but instead on God's will and kingdom agenda. It is prayer that follows the biblical pattern provided to us through the Word of God.

The Word of God will help to guide our praying. Psalms are a wonderful gift to help us learn to pray. God has revealed His character to us so we in turn can praise Him for who He is. We can thank Him for all He has done.

And all of this guides our response to God as we call on Him for help in our lives and for others. This guides us as we live in the world, how we rely on His promises, how we fulfill the mission that God has given to us. And all our praying will be focused on giving God all glory, honor, and praise.

As we go through this course, we will see the value of using the Word of God, much like we saw in Psalm 103, to draw us into a deeper relationship, deeper fellowship, more authentic worship of God as we pray.

Turn with me to page 4. We see this term often used. It is quoted from Isaiah 56:3-8, as well as in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. "My house will be called a house of prayer."

Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah when he said, "My house will be called a house of prayer."

What do you think it means for a church to become a house of prayer?

The Bible doesn't say exactly what it means for a church to be a house of prayer, but we can assume that a house of prayer is a church where prayer is considered the means of access to God's power and the real work of the ministry that is integrated into every facet of the life of the church. Prayer is not just a ministry of the church. Prayer is the work of the ministry. It should be incorporated into every facet of the life of the church.

To be a house of prayer, we must proclaim a passionate call to prayer as leaders. We must be intentional and relentless in our efforts to teach believers to pray. It is not something that just happens naturally when we put our trust in Jesus.

Prayer must be the expression of our hunger for divine companionship, of a desire for intimacy with our Creator, of our need to build a deeper relationship with our Lord. Prayer is relational. Follow along as I read this quote from Douglas Comstra.

"Prayer is seeking God, surrendering ourselves to God's will, receiving God's gifts and blessings, welcoming God's presence in our lives, expressing our gratitude to God and interceding on behalf of others in need. Prayer is not a means to an end. Prayer is not primarily a duty. It is the nourishment of a relationship between heaven and earth, between God and His people, between Savior and sinners, between the Lord and His servants, between Father and His children, between the head of the church and its members. God calls us into relationship. God calls us to pray."

Hopefully, you get that sense that prayer is much more than an activity.

Prayer is a relationship with the God of the universe. It is an open door, an open invitation that God has given us to seek Him, to know Him in a deeper way, and then to receive from Him the power that is needed to accomplish the things that He has given us to do while on mission for Him. The ultimate mark of a praying church is that God's presence fills His house.

The single most distinguishing characteristic of a house of prayer is that it is filled with the tangible presence of God. We get a glimpse of that in 1 Corinthians 14:24-25.

The apostle Paul wrote that when an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying or teaching the Word of God, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment, as the secrets of their heart are laid bare. In response, they will fall and worship God, explaining God really is among us, or surely God is in this place.

- A lack of spiritual appetite in the congregation is replaced by spiritual hunger.
- Unbelievers' hearts are converted by the life-giving messages preached from the pulpit.
- The spiritual objectives of the church begin to move forward, not so much by human ingenuity and hard work, but as by the supernatural assistance of God's Holy Spirit.

By God's grace, may our churches be so much more than churches that just pray, meaning an activity, and they would be praying churches. Prayer would be a lifestyle, the culture, the DNA of our churches. Our churches would be filled with believers who are devoted to prayer.

You might want to stop the recording now and spend a few minutes thinking about these last two questions at the bottom of page 4.

1. Describe the role that prayer plays in your life and the life of your church.
2. What do you think that a church committed to being a house of prayer might look like?

On the top of page 5, you will find a prayer for this course.

The theme of this prayer is devoting ourselves to prayer. As I read and pray through this prayer, you will notice various themes that I have placed in the margin on the left side of the page. Please make note of the Scripture references at the bottom of the page. Each paragraph of this prayer is inspired by these Scripture passages.

This is one more effort to emphasize the importance that worship-based prayer is based on prayer that flows from the Word of God through the leading of the Spirit of God. Follow along with me as I read this prayer. It is based on Colossians 4:2, *“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”*

“Father, as I come before you now, I am so very aware of my own prayerlessness. I think and worry much but pray about so little in comparison. Forgive me, Lord, by the work of the Holy Spirit within me. Teach me to pray and to do so continually.

I ask also, Lord, for my church family. May my brothers and sisters in Christ be full of joy as they wait on you in the midst of trials that they are experiencing, and may they be faithful in prayer.

Remove from our lives all things that hinder our prayers, unbelief, sin that we have not turned from, unforgiveness, and may we respond to every prompting of the Holy Spirit that we might be unfettered, unchained, and pray with all of our hearts.

Father, I ask that fervency in prayer and intercession be released on us so that we might become a true house of prayer for all nations. Replace any prayerlessness within our church with a passionate longing to see your church revived. May prayer become the fuel of the Holy Spirit among us.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I ask that our church become one filled with those who always pray and never give up. May we be found faithful when you come, Lord Jesus. May we be those that you call upon by the Spirit to watch on the walls of your church for the cities and even the nations.

I ask that you stir our hearts with an urgency to pray and give us faith-filled, God-sized dreams and requests. Teach us to pray your heart. Teach us to pray your word. May the men of our church lead their families on their knees in prayer. May our women humble themselves before you and be self-controlled so they can pray with greater boldness. Raise up intercessions among the youth of our church. Grab hold of their hearts and fill them with great faith. May our hearts be and minds be set on the things of your kingdom. Teach us to pray, Lord, from youngest to oldest. Teach us to pray, Lord!

Do these things, I ask, so that we, your church, might come alive by the Spirit and be allowed the privilege of participating in the harvest that is coming. Even this day, O God, call your people to humility, to turn from sin, to seek your face. Wake us up from our slumber, O God, for surely time is short!

In the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and intercedes for me and for you. Amen.”

There is a wonderful book called *Pray the Word for Your Church* by Tiece King. This book is filled with sample prayers to be pray for your church based on Scripture. We often wonder if we are praying according to God’s will. Surely as we pray in one accord with God’s Word, we will be praying God’s will.

In the left margin of page 5 you will notice various prayer themes for us to keep in mind as we begin this course.

- We focus our prayers on being honest and transparent before God.
- Our prayer is to ask God to teach us to pray.
- We desire to be faithful in our praying, with no limitations or hindrances.
- We desire to be fervent and passionate.
- We ask for strength to be persistent while having a sense of urgency for prayer.
- Our prayers would be focused on the God's kingdom and will, not our own agenda.
- Our prayers would be led by the Holy Spirit and fed through the Word of God.

As we bring Lesson 1 to a close, please turn with me to pages 6 and 7. I will highlight some of these great expectations that surround worship-based prayer. I encourage you to take time to read these two pages and look up the Scriptures that are listed.

As we seek to grow in our personal prayer lives as well as within the life of our churches, we can expect to face spiritual opposition on many fronts. This should not surprise us since we are engaged in a cosmic, spiritual battle between light and darkness. Yet from the promises of God's Word and throughout church history, we should be encouraged as we understand all the Lord will do as we resolutely seek His face together in life and ministry.

These two pages highlight some of the expectations we may realize through a life and church devoted to worship-based prayer.

- We can expect Spirit-provided direction through godly leaders.
- We can expect authentic unity within the church.
- We can expect transformation will take place through the Holy Spirit.
- We can expect personal encouragement in the face of trials and opposition.
- We can expect Spirit-empowered outreach.
- We can expect growing trust.
- We can expect the grace of humility because God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.
- We can expect that our church services will be transformed with a focus on the glory of God.
- We can expect a spirit of thanksgiving, overflowing with thanksgiving, as we see lives focused on seeking God's face and living out his will.
- We can expect joyful generosity.
- We can expect spontaneous ministries of mobilization, reaching out to villages and communities in fulfillment of the Great Commission.
- We can expect God-ordained growth, growth individually, spiritual depth, as well as seeing God add to our number daily, those who are being saved.
- We can expect the potential for great spiritual revival, within the church. Churches who have grown cold, will see a spark, a rebirth, a renewing that takes place that leading to evangelism in a community, in a nation, and even as in the past, on a worldwide level.
- We can expect an eternal reward. When we stand before the Lord, He will not ask us about the size of our ministry, but the substance of our ministry. Ministry

accomplished in the mere energy of human effort will be burned up like wood, hay, and straw. But Christ-reliant, Spirit-empowered, prayer-energized ministry will endure for His glory and our reward will be like gold, silver, and precious stones.

May God give us conviction, perseverance, and great hope as we expect and experience His reward for a faithful praying people.

Take a few minutes to read these two pages and consider which of these expectations are most needed to remember, for you personally and for your church?

Pray that God will move in your life, move in the life of your church, move in the churches in your community to begin to experience more of these glorious expectations as we seek God's face together for your glory.

This will bring Lesson 1 to a close. This was just an introduction to help establish a mutual understanding of the importance of prayer in the local church. Jesus said, "My house will be a house of prayer for all nations." We started the discussion of what it means to be a house of prayer and to begin to focus more on the relational aspect of prayer.

In this course we will discover that worship-based prayer is ...

- scripture-fed,
- Spirit-led,
- focused on the glory of God,
- focused on our transformation,
- focused on seeing God's kingdom come and His will being done, not our own personal agendas.
- We will be more focused on seeing God change us, not just change things around us.

I look forward to taking this journey with you over these coming lessons as we respond to God's invitation to seek His face more than just His hand.