

English Transcript

Worship-based Prayer

Lesson 6: What is Worship-based Prayer?

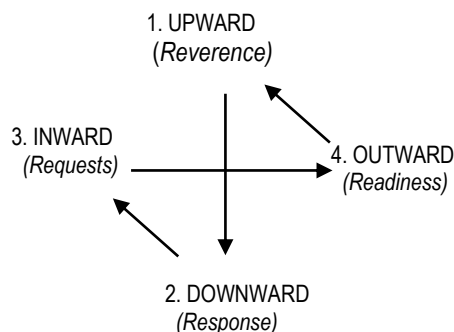
Welcome back to Worship-based Prayer: Everything changes when we seek God's face. This is Lesson 6 and the title is *What is worship-based prayer?*
We will begin on page 22 in your handout.

One challenge that many believers face today is a total lack of discipleship or training in prayer, especially with leading others in prayer. While there are several helpful models and approaches, many have found the concept of Worship-Based Prayer to be a powerful and practical approach to implement prayer in their churches, small groups, and even their personal lives. It is certainly not the only way to pray, but we have found it to be especially helpful for groups just beginning to learn to pray corporately, or for congregations that may have grown stagnant in their typical prayer routines. This is largely because:

- It is Scriptural. It is based on the "Lord's Prayer" or the model prayer in Matthew 6.
- It draws people's focus toward God, as opposed to their own needs or requests.
- It provides a model to experience life giving prayer that can be applied to any passage of Scripture.

You may wonder where the diagram for this prayer model comes from and how the picture of a musical conductor relates to prayer. A good friend of mine, Daniel Henderson with Strategic Renewal, developed this model many years ago based on Matthew 6. He grew up with a love for music. He played instruments, sang in the choir, and received a scholarship for vocal music in college. So, it was natural for him to experience a convergence between his love for music and the Lord's Prayer. The result is what is referred to as the "4/4 pattern" of prayer.

In music, the 4/4 pattern is the most basic beat. In adapting the elements of that pattern to the Lord's Prayer, it looks like this:



Each time I now look at a biblical text to begin to pray, I think in terms of this pattern. Keep in mind that our prayers always begin in the Scriptures. So, I always start with an open Bible. Very often I use a Psalm, but really any passage from the Bible can begin our praying, using this

pattern. We also know that our teacher is the Holy Spirit. We come to the Bible with a ready mind, but also with our entire being surrendered to the instruction of the Holy Spirit as we pray.

The Starting Place: Reverence

Imagine a musical conductor before an orchestra. The conductor raises a hand high in the air to capture the attention of the musicians and singers. Every member of the orchestra and choir is at full attention. In the prayer pattern that Jesus gave His disciples, He instructs us to begin with reverence, an upward focus on worship (*"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name"*).



In keeping with Jesus' instruction, prayer begins with the character of God as we take time to focus our entire being on the wonders of who God is. We had a taste of this in Lesson 1 as we started this course and read Psalm 103. This is an upward focus on God. We are not asking God for anything. This is time to praise God for who He is and thank Him for all that He has done.

A.W. Tozer said it perfectly" *"What comes to mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us."*

Spending quality time with an open Bible, delighting in the names and character of God, is the most important aspect of seeking God's face and it is essential as a starting point of prayer. Our reverence for God not only prepares us for worship through prayer but it also helps us exercise our faith in God through prayer. Hebrews 11:6 says, *"But without faith it is impossible to please God, for everyone who comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He is a rewarding of those who earnestly seek Him."*

As we begin to pray in private or with others, it is natural for us to incorporate praise and thanksgiving into our praying. Psalm 100:4 tells us to, *"Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His name!"*

This includes praising God for His attributes and character. Praise is our response to the person, presence, position, power, greatness, majesty, and the love of God. Praise is glorifying God for Who He is. It is the most appropriate way to enter His presence. Since its source is God Himself, praise centers on the excellencies, perfections, and glories of His nature, His character, and His role in human affairs.

- *"Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable."* (Psalm 145:3)
- *"Yet Thou art holy, O Thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel."* (Psalm 22:3)

Thanksgiving is our response to the goodness and the grace of God. Thanksgiving is thanking God for what He has done and for what He is going to do. Since its source is the actions of God, thanksgiving declares positively both that He is the Giver of every good and perfect gift and that to the believer every gift is good, perfect, and acceptable.

- *"What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" "To Thee I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving..." (Psalm 116:12,17a)*
- *"Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name...for with such sacrifices God is pleased." (Hebrews 13:15-16)*

It is good to remember that as we begin to pray, we do not need to be asking God for anything. Our focus is just to worship and adore the Lord.

We can begin with a Psalm or another portion of Scripture. We can ask ourselves, "What does this passage reveal about God and His character?" we can invite the Holy Spirit to give us understanding into what the text tells us about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We discover truths about God's nature, names, and person in the text we are reading. We begin our prayer time seeking His face in worship as we pray simple statements like these back to God:

- I praise You because You are _____
- I have seen Your power in _____
- Thank You for showing me Your grace when _____

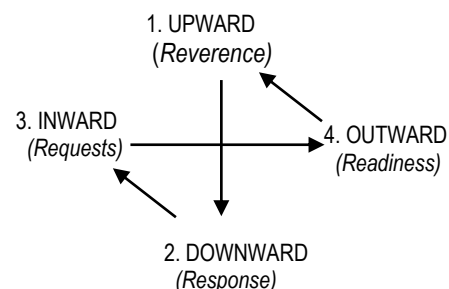
There are helpful prayer tools in the Appendix beginning on page 31 in your handout. We will review all of these tools in detail in our final lesson. I just want to highlight a few here that relate to the Upward stroke of Reverence for God.

- Pray 5 Psalms a Day (Appendix I)
- Praying God's Names and Attributes (Appendix II, III)
- Who I Am in Christ (Appendix IV)

The Downward Stroke: Response

Next the musical conductor gives the downward beat and the composition begins. In the prayer pattern, our "music" of praise and thanksgiving has already begun. Now we respond to God's character. Jesus taught the essence of this when He said, *"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

As we spend time praising God, worshiping Him, thanking Him, not asking for anything, this reminds us that we are different from God. He is holy. He is worthy. We need His help.



This brings us to a place of surrender and submission, of aligning our will to his will, our hearts with his heart. We are listening for the Spirit of God to convict us and guide us.

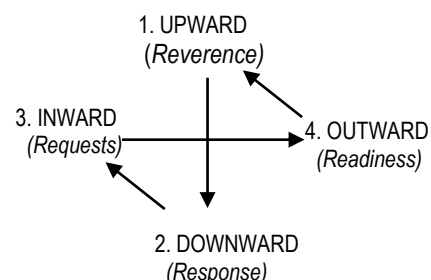
Scottish writer Robert Law said, *“Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man’s will done in heaven, but for getting God’s will done on earth.”*

This is a time to respond to God's character in prayer as we consider His will, from His Word, and for the sake of His purposes on earth. This also involves yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit as we respond to His invitation to be living a fruitful and obedient life. Introspection and surrender mark this time of response. It is a season of pledged obedience to the will and Word of God.

The will of God is not only the highest good, the greatest achievement and the best any person could hope for in this life, it is also the command of God. Since God is our loving Heavenly Father, prayer becomes that time when we seek Him, not to bring Him to our viewpoint, but to bring our will in alignment with His will.

The Inward Stroke: Requests

From the downward beat, the musical conductor now moves the baton, slanting upward and left setting the tempo for the music. In prayer, with hearts filled with worship and aligned to God’s kingdom and will, we are now ready to express trust in God for our needs and the needs of others.



Psalm 9:10 says, *“Those who know Your name will put their trust in You.”*

Jesus’ model prayer continues with, *“Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”*

This involves a period of heartfelt requests with the themes of resources and relationships. We are trusting God to provide for our physical and spiritual needs. We also ask God to work through our relationships with others as we pray for forgiveness and reconciliation with others. We call this the inward stroke because this element of prayer reveals the inner realities, the needs of our heart, and aligns us with God’s self-sacrificing, gracious, merciful and forgiving love.

Jesus had just said our Father knows our needs before we ask (Matthew 6:8). This is not a time of informing God of our needs as much as it is a conscious trust in God as the perfect definer and provider of our needs. It involves prayer about personal requests and the concerns of others. This focus can also include corporate concerns, such as challenges within our churches

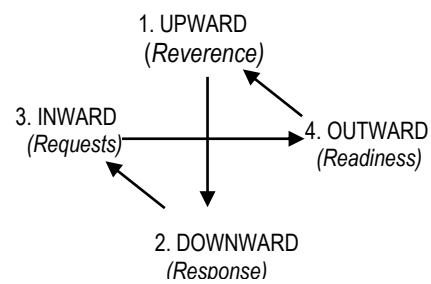
or broader issues in the body of Christ and in the world. In all this, we recognize that, *"God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19)."*

Once again, there are helpful prayer tools in the Appendix in support of this prayer element. These tools remind us to continue to bring God's Word into our prayers.

- Who I am in Christ (Appendix IV)
- Praying God's purposes for His church (Appendix V)
- Prayers of the New Testament (Appendix VI)
- Praying for the Lost (Appendix VII)
- Praying for Revival (Appendix VIII)

The Downward Stroke: Readiness

As the music continues, the conductor moves the beat to the right, keeping tempo. As prayer continues, the outward stroke reminds us of the spiritual battle before us, and more important, reassures us of the spiritual resources within us. We know the time comes when we must get off our knees and reenter the war zone and do the work that God has prepared for us.



This next aspect of the model prayer is meant to prepare us for the spiritual battle, to be ready to engage with the world. Jesus prays, *"Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

We recognize our own inability to overcome the temptations and attacks of daily life. We are praying to be battle ready through our trust in Christ. He can escape the snares of temptation has promised in 1 Corinthians 10:13 and God's Word is sufficient to equip us in the face of any temptation as it did for Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew 4.

We pledge ourselves to walk in obedience and victory as the fruit of our praying. Look for God's promises to guard us against temptations, toils and snares that await us beyond the door of our prayer room. This is a wonderful way to integrate Scripture memory into our prayer time as we become battle ready.

Ephesians 6:10-20 provides us with a clear understanding of our enemy and the mighty power of God available to us for this spiritual battle. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world, but instead, our weapons have divine power for demolishing strongholds that are set up in direct opposition to God (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

The apostle Paul challenges us to “fight the good fight” as he himself did (1 Timothy 6:12), to be a “soldier of Christ that pleases the One who enlisted us as soldiers.” (2 Timothy 2:4), and to put on the “full armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11, 13).

This part of the model prayer is teaching us to pray,

“Father, You know where we are weak. Strengthen us through our trials and testing. Shield us from those things that may tempt us. Help us to do well under the tests. Guard us against looking at the things we should not look at or going to the places we should not go. Strengthen us so that we will honor You moment by moment.”

This is time to remember God’s promises. He is not going to leave us or forsake us. God has promised to deliver us. The evil one cannot harm us. We are God’s children and in Jesus we will overcome the world. God is preparing us to have an impact in the world around us.

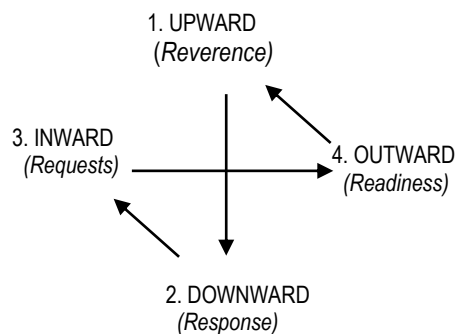
In the Appendix, you have a helpful prayer tool to remember some of the more than 7,000 promises of God in the Bible as you stand strong in His mighty power.

- Praying the Promises of God (Appendix IX)

The Upward Stroke: Reverence

With an upward motion, the musical conductor returns the beat to the starting point. The traditional version of the Lord’s Prayer we recite from the King James Version of Matthew 6:13 concludes on a high note of praise: *“For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.”*

Jesus’ model prayer ends as it began, upward in reverence of God.



This prayer model in Matthew 6:9-13 is focused on God and His character. It allows for praise and thanksgiving. There are times of surrender, confession, and repentance. We are encouraged to bring our needs before our heavenly Father, which are aligned with His kingdom and His will. There is a reminder to ask for strength in the spiritual battle, claiming God's promises, and ending with reverence and glory to God.

As we bring Lesson 6 to a close, please hear this clarifying point.

We have spent the last 20 minutes discussing prayer and the model for prayer that Jesus offers in Matthew 6. Jesus is not giving us a prayer to be memorized and repeated mechanically. Jesus is calling us not to pray like the world but instead to pray with our hearts focused on our deep, intimate relationship with God.

With that said, we must be careful not to make this prayer model a magic formula for praying. As God's children, we are invited to cry out to Him at any place and at any time. Each time we pray, we are not required to follow every aspect of this model prayer. There are times, when in great need, we may simply cry out to God in this way:

"Lord, save me!" "Lord, help me!" "Lord, rescue me!"

Or, like Hannah in 1 Samuel 2, after God answered her prayer for a son, she lifted her voice to God and never asked God for anything. Her prayer contained only praise and thanksgiving.

Or, we are so overcome by our sin, that we cry out like the tax collector asking for forgiveness and mercy because we are not worthy in the sight of holy God.

Many Christians pray without a clear understanding of the foundational role of worship in prayer and they lack a biblical, balanced model for prayer. As a result, prayer can be reduced to an abbreviated routine that includes some repetitious and superficial topics, before moving on with the activities of the day.

Jesus intends for us to experience much more through prayer.

It should be clear from this lesson that prayer has many aspects. One of the most important though is that prayer is relational. Prayer is also to be balanced with praise, thanksgiving, surrender, confession, requests asked for in faith, trusting in God's promises, and reliance on God's power and love. Prayer may be the greatest demonstration of our faith and dependence on God. Jesus is instructing us how to communicate with God in a balanced way that glorifies God and transforms us into the likeness of Christ.

Always be on guard for praying with the wrong motives of the Pharisees and the wrong methods of the Gentiles. In Lesson 7 we will provide a few practical examples of what Worship-based Prayer looks like as we pray through a passage of Scripture.