

With Christ in the School of Prayer

With Christ in the School of Prayer by Andrew Murray is a Christian classic on prayer available for free download from www.ccel.org/ccel/murray/prayer.html

Andrew Murray presents 31 lessons intended to be used one each day for one month. Each chapter is based on a key Bible verse on prayer. We will use his book as a guide through the topic. All Scripture quotations below are from the NRSV.

1. *The Only Teacher*

“Lord, teach us to pray” **Luke 11:1**

1. Do you want to learn more about prayer from Jesus? What are some of the things you would like to learn?
2. Why would we need to be taught to pray?

2. *True Worshippers*

“... in spirit and truth” **John 4:23-24**

1. Do you think prayer and worship are related to each other? How?
2. How does the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life influence the way we pray?

3. *Alone With God*

“... pray to your Father who is in secret ...” **Matthew 6:6**

1. Do you have a place where you usually pray?
2. Can you think of a reason for God being “in secret”?
3. What difference does it make to approach God as “your Father”?
4. God already knows our needs. “At first sight it might appear as if this thought made prayer less necessary”. Why might the opposite be true?

4. *The Model Prayer*

“Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” **Matthew 6:9**

1. In what ways would a model prayer be useful?
2. For God's kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven means that it is okay to pray for healing for there is no sickness in heaven. Do you pray for healing?
3. Why would people who are forgiven be more forgiving of others?

5. The Certain Answer To Prayer.

“Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” **Matthew 7:7-8**

“You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.” **James 4:3**

1. What role do you think expectation plays in prayer?
2. Do you agree that if a prayer is not answered we must have prayed amiss?
3. Is the purpose of prayer getting answers?

6. The Infinite Fatherliness of God

⁹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? ¹⁰ Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! **Matthew 7:9-11**

1. “Fatherlike giving is the Divine response to childlike living.” Does this imply a condition on receiving an answer to prayer?
2. “But will not such teaching discourage the feeble one?”
3. “... the secret of effectual prayer is: to have the heart filled with the Father-love of God.” Do you agree? What do you think this means?

7. The All-Comprehensive Gift

“... If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”
Luke 1:13

1. In Luke's account of another occasion when Jesus taught using this parable there is a difference. What is it?
2. “if there is one thing on earth we can be sure of, it is this, that the Father desires to have us filled with His Spirit, that He delights to give us His Spirit.” Why pray to be filled with the Spirit?

8. The Boldness of God's Friends

⁵ And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' ⁷ And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs. **Luke 11:5-8**

1. Murray sees in this parable a teaching about intercession for the needs of others, especially for those who are perishing. What do you think?
2. Why would Jesus teach importune (persistent, urgent, pressing) prayer?
3. Murray suggests that intercession is part of faith's training-school and God's delay in answering our prayer might be to test our faith. Do you agree?

9. Prayer Provides Labourers

³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; ³⁸ therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest."
Matthew 9:37-38

1. What do you think about these questions: "Strange, is it not, that He should ask His disciples to pray for this? And could He not pray Himself? And would not one prayer of His avail more than a thousand of theirs? And God, the Lord of the harvest, did He not see the need? And would not He, in His own good time, send forth labourers without their prayer?"
2. Do we forget to pray this prayer because we lack the compassion of Jesus for the lost and lack faith in God's willingness and power to bring about the results?

10. Prayer Must Be Specific

Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." **Mark 10:51** (also Luke 18:41)

1. Why does Murray think that much of our prayers are "vague and pointless?"
2. What would be the benefit of making our prayers more specific?
3. Is it spiritual laziness not to know God's will?

11. The Faith That Takes

So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. **Mark 11:24**

1. How does Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple relate to Jesus' teaching:
⁴ ...“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to my father David” (2 Chronicles 6:4)?
2. Jesus made similar promises elsewhere to answer prayers for “whatever you ask”, see Mk 9:23; Mt 17:20. Why would Jesus teach this way? What is the condition that applies?
3. Note the link between prayer and faith when Elijah prayed for rain. See 1 Kings 17:1 & 18:41-45.

12. The Secret of Believing Prayer

²² Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. ²³ Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. **Mark 11:22-23**

1. Mark Chapter 11 raises the question, “How ever can I attain the faith that knows that it receives all it asks?” Do you feel this way? Andrew Murray suggests that a personal faith in God is the necessary prerequisite for faith that God will answer your prayers. Do you agree?
2. “The value of the promise depends on the promiser.” Apply this to Jesus.
3. “Every special exhibition of the power of faith was the fruit of a special revelation of God.” See the example of Abraham in Genesis 15:1 & 6.

13. Prayer and Fasting

¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁰ He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.” [Other ancient authorities add verse 21, “But this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting.”] **Matthew 17:19-21**

1. Why could not the disciples cast out the demon when they had done so before?
2. Andrew Murray accepts verse 21 as a faithful record of Jesus' teaching, “And so He teaches us two lessons in regard to prayer of deep importance. The one, that faith needs a life of prayer in which to grow and keep strong. The other, that prayer needs fasting for its full and perfect development.” Others think verse 21 is a well-meaning addition by a scribe to explain the disciples' failure. Discuss these alternatives.

14. Prayer and Love

“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.” **Mark 11:25**

1. Murray says, “Faith and love are essential to each other.” In what ways might a lack of forgiveness be related to the effectiveness of your prayers? See Mt 5:23-24.
2. “The spirit of forgiveness is the spirit of love.” Does forgiveness have to lead to reconciliation with the offender?

15. The Power of United Prayer

¹⁹ “Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” **Matthew 18:19-20**

1. In Mt 6:6 Jesus taught about the importance of solitary prayer, but here Jesus teaches about prayer with others. Why would agreement be important?
2. “The bond that unites a man to his fellow-men is no less real and close than that which unites him to God: he is one with them.” What things should we pray about together? See Paul's prayer requests in Rom 15:30; 2 Cor 1:11; Eph 6:18-19; and Phil 1:19.

16. The Power of Persevering Prayer

¹ Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. ² He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. ³ In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Grant me justice against my opponent.’ ⁴ For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, ‘Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.’” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? ⁸ I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” **Luke 18:1-8**

1. Why would we need to ask God for something many times? Murray points out that God is the one who has to patiently wait for the right time to answer your prayer.
2. “Our great danger in this school of the answer delayed, is the temptation to think that, after all, it may not be God’s will to give us what we ask.” How do you know if your prayer is in accordance with God's will?

17. Prayer in Harmony with God

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.”

John 11:41-42

⁷ I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.” **Psalm 2:7-8**

1. Murray asks, “How can God’s sovereignty and our will, God’s liberty and ours, be reconciled?” How would you answer that?
2. Our prayers are offered to the Father by the Son. Why would prayer be part of God's means to achieve his will?
3. Discuss Murray's conclusion, “the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity no longer is an abstract speculation, but the living manifestation of the way in which it were possible for man to be taken up into the fellowship of God, and his prayer to become a real factor in God’s rule of this earth.”

18. Prayer in Harmony with the Destiny of Man

¹⁹ “Show me the coin used for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” **Matthew 22:19-20**

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness;”
Genesis 1:26a

1. “Bearing God’s image, [man] belongs to God: prayer to God is what he was created for.” What does it mean to be created in the image of God?
2. The Covenant of God is “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” As God's people in the world, what are some things that should be praying about?
3. Do you agree with Murray that our “prayers bestow and withhold the blessing of heaven?”

19. Power for Praying and Working

¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. **John 14:12-14**

1. “With Christ’s ascension to the Father a new epoch commences for their working and praying both. ... He who would work must pray: it is in prayer that the power for work is obtained.” In what ways were the disciples works and prayers to be different?
2. Do you believe that God will do great works through you in answer to prayer?
3. “He who would pray must work.” Do you sometimes refrain from stepping out in faith after you have prayed? “Prayer not only teaches and strengthens to work: work teaches and strengthens to pray.” Share an answer to prayer that has encouraged you in prayer.

20. The Main Purpose of Prayer

¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:12-13

1. From this passage, what is the main purpose of prayer?
2. Jesus “glorified Him on earth; He will still glorify Him in heaven” (Jn 17:1-5). How can we give glory to God in our prayers?
3. God is not glorified in our lack of prayer. Would you expect to see more answered prayers if we gave more glory to God by coming to our God in prayer?

21. The All-Inclusive Condition

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **John 15:7**

1. What does the condition to abide in Jesus mean?
2. “When we compare this promise with the experiences of most believers, we are startled by a terrible discrepancy.” Is this your experience?
3. Do you agree with Murray that to use the “if it be God's will” condition is to add to Christ's teaching?
4. “The abiding, as the Master meant it, is within our reach, for He lives to give it us.” Do you find this encouraging?

22. The Word and Prayer

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **John 15:7**

1. “What God’s words are to me, is the test of what He Himself is to me ...” What are some of the things we can do to value the Bible more?
2. “His words abiding are the equivalent of Himself abiding.” How does the indwelling Holy Spirit witness to the words of Jesus?
3. “This hearing the voice of God is something more than the thoughtful study of the Word.” What are some of the things that Murray is referring to?

23. Obedience: The Path to Power in Prayer

You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.

John 15:16

¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. **James 5:16**

1. “There are Christians who fear that such a statement [Jn 15:6] is at variance with the doctrine of free grace.” Can you see their concern?
2. Why would our obedience to Jesus relate to our effectiveness in prayer?
3. What does it mean to bear fruit?

24. The All-Powerful Plea

¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If **in my name** you ask me for anything, I will do it. **John 14:13-14**

¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him **in my name**. **John 15:16**

²³ On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father **in my name**, he will give it to you. ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything **in my name**. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete. **John 16:23-24**

On that day you will ask **in my name**. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; **John 16:26**

1. What does it mean to use another's name?
2. “When I go in the name of another, I deny myself, I take not only his name, but himself and what he is, instead of myself and what I am.” Does this mean that you cannot ask in prayer for whatever you want?
3. “Our power in using that Name, whether with God, or men, or devils *depends on the measure of our spiritual life-union.*” Murray goes on to compare this union of love with that between a bride and a bridegroom. Therefore “... whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus ...” (Colossians 3:17). Discuss the implications of these insights.

25. The Holy Spirit and Prayer

²³ On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

John 16:23-24

²⁶ On that day you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ²⁷ for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. **John 16:26-27**

²⁰ ... pray in the Holy Spirit; ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God; ... **Jude 1:20-21**

1. "In Christ's teaching on prayer there appear to be three stages in the prayer-life," childlike trust, conflict and conquest, and a mature friendship with the Master. What stage are you at?
2. What difference did the coming of the Holy Spirit make to prayer?
3. Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?

26. Christ the Intercessor

... but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." **Luke 22:32**

On that day you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; **John 16:26**

... he always lives to make intercession for them. **Hebrews 7:25b**

1. What is an intercessor? Who or what is Christ interceding for? Why?
2. "[Jesus'] entrance on the work of His eternal intercession would be the commencement and the power of their new prayer-life in His Name." Does participating in Christ's work motivate you to intercede for others?
3. "The Only-begotten is the only one who has the right to pray: to Him alone it was said, 'Ask, and it shall be given Thee.'" Would you expect the power of answered prayer to be seen more in intercession for others? Why?

27. Christ the High Priest

Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. **John 17:24**

1. John Chapter 17 is called Jesus' High Priestly prayer. Jesus' disciples are called to be priests and share in his work of intercession. What is the work of a priest that Jesus is called to as a High Priest and Christians as priests?
2. Jesus' prayer started with his relation to his Father, then extended to his disciples, and lastly he prays for the church, especially for its unity of the Spirit and love. In his prayer, Jesus submitted his will to his Father and availed himself of the Father's promise to hear him. How can we use Jesus' prayer as a model for our own intercession?

28. Christ the Sacrifice

He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." **Mark 14:36**

1. Christ gave his life as a sacrifice in obedience to his Father's will even though his prayer for deliverance from the cross was not answered. "To a superficial scholar it may appear to take away the courage to pray in faith." Have you wondered at this?
2. Christ surrendered his will to that of the Father. In his humanity, Jesus embraced the death that is the lot of all humans, made as horrifying as Satan could make it in order to tempt Jesus to resort to his divinity and call on his Father to save him. "He endured the not answering of His prayer, that our prayers might find an answer." Do you see how Jesus' prayer can be seen as an encouragement to pray?

29. Our Boldness in Prayer

¹⁴ And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him. **1 John 5:14-15**

1. "One of the greatest hindrances to believing prayer is with many undoubtedly this: they know not if what they ask is according to the will of God." Do you sometimes find it difficult to boldly ask God for things in prayer?
2. "The great mistake here is that God's children do not really believe that it is possible to know God's will." Do you think Scripture teaches us how God would generally have us live? Would it be okay to pray in accordance with this general will of God in the absence of any special revelation?
3. Boldness in prayer comes from being guided by both the Word and the Spirit. Does this mean that if our prayer is not answered, we have asked amiss?

30. The Ministry of Intercession

... like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:5

... but you shall be called priests of the LORD, you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory.

Isaiah 61:6

1. “A priest is thus a man who does not at all live for himself. He lives with God and for God.” Have you thought of your calling as a priest to involve you in intercession?
2. “Our priestly power with God depends on our personal life and walk.” How do you feel about the need to surrender yourself to this holy work?

31. A Life of Prayer

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

1. “At the close of our meditations it will not be difficult to say what is needed to live such a life of prayer. The first thing is undoubtedly the entire sacrifice of the life to God’s kingdom and glory.” Do you find it difficult to live a life of prayer?
2. “This life devoted to God must be accompanied by the deep confidence that our prayer is effectual.” What are some things we can do to encourage confidence that our prayers are effective?
3. Jesus teaches us to pray. We know that Jesus is praying still. “And to the faith that knows it gets what it asks, prayer is not a work or a burden, but a joy and a triumph; it becomes a necessity and a second nature.” Do you want this to be your experience of prayer?

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