

FOLLOWING JESUS
A Disciple's Handbook

Lesson 5:
“Following Jesus in Praying and Praising”

Praying and Praising Introduction

☐ Read Luke 11:1-13 and 1 Peter 2:9-10

Jesus, the One who spoke the universe into existence and holds it together by the word of His power, used His earthly voice for prevailing prayer and powerful praise. (☐ Read Hebrews 1:1-3.) Jesus lived a life of prayer marked by signs, wonders and miracles as He went. (☐ Read Luke 5:15-16.) Praying wasn't an occasional activity for Jesus, but rather a constant flow in His ministry to God and man. Jesus was also a Man of great praise. He displayed a life of profound gratitude to the Father, always rightly representing God's glory to others. In so doing, He accurately expressed who God was and what He had done, leaving an example for all God-honoring people to follow.

Every disciple of Jesus has joined a holy and royal priesthood and has been given a ministry of prayer and praise. (☐ Read 1 Peter 2:9-10.) It is the honor and inheritance of every disciple to live a life of answered prayer. It is the joy and privilege of every disciple to behold the greatness of the Father and the Son and boldly declare God's praises. Praying and praising like Jesus are top priorities and tremendous privileges for true disciples.

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Praying and Praising Defined

The words for *prayer* in the Bible have to do with making vocal, constant, faith-filled requests to God that are in accordance with His will for the earth. In the New Testament, prayer is an attitude as well as an action. It is an always-listening, ever-ready attitude to agree with the revealed will of God. The Apostle Paul instructed the Thessalonian church to pray without ceasing. (☐ Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17.) This doesn't mean a nonstop, uninterrupted flow of words and requests, but rather an attitude of ever-ready praying. Prayer is a disciple's ministry of an unending willingness and divine eagerness to pray to God at any time for anything the Holy Spirit directs us to pray. Prayer produces a powerful partnership between us and God. It isn't an attempt to overcome God's unwillingness to act on our behalf, but an exercise of

accessing God's overwhelming willingness to act on our behalf, bringing man to God and God to man. (□ Read Matthew 7:7-11.) Prayer is a lifestyle pattern of listening to the Spirit, receiving revelation concerning God's will, agreeing with God's will through faith-filled requests, and engaging God's provision and direction.

The words for *praise* in the Bible have to do with vocal declarations of the essence and exploits of God. God's essence is about who He is. God's exploits are about what He's done, is doing, and will do. Praise can be spoken, sung, accompanied by instruments or the lifting of hands. Praise can provoke to action or pacify the soul to peace. Praise is full of faith, and accompanied by gratitude and rejoicing. Praise is an attitude of gratitude that becomes a vocal expression concerning God's goodness. The two primary books in the Bible that teach us about praise and worship are the book of Psalms and the book of Revelation. These books tell us that praise is about continually putting all of our focus on the Father and the Son. Praise is unceasing and triumphant. (□ Read Psalm 34:1; Psalm 47:1; Revelation 4:8; Revelation 11:16-18.) God's praises should be great because He is great. (□ Read Psalm 145:3; Revelation 5:13-14.)

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Praying and Praising in the Life of Jesus

Jesus lived a life of constant prayer. In the first chapter of Mark we see Jesus in a solitary place praying to the Father, early in the morning, after a long evening of supernatural ministry. (□ Read Mark 1:32-35.) In the third chapter of Luke we read about Jesus coming up from the waters of John's baptism praying and receiving the Holy Spirit. (□ Read Luke 3:21-22.) The more Jesus' ministry progressed, and the more the crowds grew, the more Jesus withdrew to pray. (□ Read Luke 5:16.) Whenever Jesus prayed, His petitions were actually answered. The constant in Christ's life of answered prayer was that He only did what He saw the Father doing and only said (including in prayer) what He heard the Father saying. (□ Read John 5:19; 12:49-50.) Jesus was always listening, receiving, agreeing, and engaging. He never had a doubt the Father was listening or that His petitions would be granted, because His life of prayer was aligned with the Father's will. (□ Read John 11:41-42.)

Jesus was a Man of great praise. Jesus was always revealing and lifting up the grace and goodness of the Father. For Jesus, praise was a proactive, faith-filled exercise that demonstrated to people His settled confidence in God's plan and provision. (□ Read Matthew 14:19; 26:26; John 11:41.) In the gospel of Mark, we see that Jesus sang the Passover hymns with His disciples before heading to the cross. (□ Read Mark 14:26.) This collection of hymns came from Psalms 115-118 and includes some of most profound praise language in the Bible.

You couldn't be around Jesus without constantly hearing about the wonder and works of the Father.

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Praying and Praising in the Lives of Jesus' Followers

The early church was steadfastly devoted to prayer. (☐ Read Acts 2:42; 6:4.) Guided by the Spirit, Christ's early followers lived lives of answered prayer. Salvation, healing, deliverance, miracles, provision, wisdom, and divine protection were the norm for the early church. The reason for this was that the Father's will was discovered by the Spirit, and agreed with and accessed through faith-filled prayer. The apostle James declared that the prayer of faith had the power to profoundly impact human need at every level. (☐ Read James 5:13-18.) The apostle Paul exhorted the believers in Philippi to not worry about anything but pray about everything, believing that righteous requests would be met and rewarded. (☐ Read Philippians 4:6-7.)

From the moment Christ's disciples received the baptism with the Holy Spirit, the wonderful works of God were proclaimed. (☐ Read Acts 2:11.) The New Testament writers fill their letters with lavish praise to the Father and the Son. Any time the crowds wanted to ascribe praise to the apostles for mighty miracles, the apostles were quick to give glory to God. (☐ Read Acts 3:12-16; 14:8-18.) We see in the life of the apostle Paul that rejoicing in God's wonder and works was a constant in his life. (☐ Read Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16.) He commanded the early churches not only to rejoice in everything, but to give thanks all the time for every single blessing of God. (☐ Read Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18). The early church filled the earth with God's good news and God's great praise.

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Praying and Praising in Our Lives

If someone is going to follow Jesus, a life of prayer may be voluntary, but it is not optional. Jesus instructs us in His Word, "*when you pray,*" not "*if you pray.*" (☐ Read Matthew 6:6-15.) The key to a life of answered prayer is discovering the will of God and agreeing with it in faith. (☐ Read 1 John 5:14-15.) One of our challenges in prayer is that we don't know what to pray for as we ought to. (☐ Read Romans 8:26-27.) The answer in meeting this challenge is that God freely reveals His will to us through His Word and by His Spirit. Then, He calls us to lift our voices and confidently lay hold of His will being done. Directed by God's Spirit and anchored in

God's Word, we are able to see the things God desires to do. When we ask in faith – free from doubt – for God's will to be done in the earth, we can be filled with confidence that our petitions will be granted. (☐ Read James 1:6-7.)

In the same way our praying must be led by the Spirit, our praising must be led by the Spirit as well. (☐ Read Ephesians 5:18-20; 1 Corinthians 14:15.) It was the Holy Spirit who inspired the writers of the Psalms to honor God for who He truly was. And it was the same Holy Spirit who revealed to the apostle John the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His splendor and glory. Likewise, the Holy Spirit will lead us as followers and disciples of Jesus who praise and worship God in Spirit and in truth. (☐ Read John 4:21-24.) As disciples, we are called to fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of our God. (☐ Read Habakkuk 2:14.) A primary way to accomplish this is through our ministry of perpetually praising the wonder and works of God.

As members of the royal priesthood under Jesus the High Priest, we are now priests of prayer and praise. The most important key to this ministry of prayer and praise is being led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. He reveals God's will in prayer. He gives us fresh revelation of the glory of the Father and the Son and the appropriate praise response. As disciples called to engage in a life of dynamic prayer and praise, we must follow Christ's example and the example of all who raised their voices to God and released His power in the earth.

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

Use the following lines to write out the scripture to help you commit it to memory.

KEY TRUTH: As disciples called to engage in a life of dynamic prayer and praise, we must follow Christ's example and the example of all who raised their voices to God and released His power in the earth.

YOUR RESPONSE:

This is how you can respond in loving obedience to Jesus as you apply the truths from this lesson to your life.

- Allow the Holy Spirit to empower you for an always-listening, ever-ready attitude of praying.
- As the Spirit reveals to you God's Word and God's will, agree with it in faith-filled prayer.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to you new revelations of the Father and the Son. Respond with words of faith-filled praise.
- Take every opportunity possible to rejoice in the Lord Jesus and to give God the Father thanks for all His blessings.

WRITTEN RESPONSE: Lesson Review

Review each section from the lesson on the previous pages to fill in each blank below. This review will help to reinforce the truths from this lesson in your life.

1. Prayer is a _____ pattern of _____ to the Spirit, _____ concerning God's will, _____ with God's will through _____ requests, and _____ God's _____ and _____.
2. The words for _____ in the Bible have to do with _____ of the _____ and _____ of God.
3. The constant in Christ's _____ of _____ was that He only _____ what He _____ the Father _____ and only _____ (including in _____) what He _____ the Father _____.
4. The early church _____ the earth with God's _____ and God's _____.
5. As _____ called to _____ in a life of dynamic _____ and _____, we must follow _____ example and the example of _____ who _____ their _____ to God and _____ His _____ in the earth.

WRITTEN RESPONSE: Life Reflection

Using the journaling section on the pages at the end of this lesson, write in your own words your responses to the following questions.

1. What have you learned and what has impacted you personally from this lesson?
2. In reading the scripture references in this lesson, what are you sensing and seeing the Holy Spirit highlighting and revealing to you that will enable you to better follow Jesus?
3. As a disciple and follower of Jesus, what steps of loving obedience do you need to take to see what you have learned in this lesson become ongoing practices and patterns in your life?