

A short study on the topic of

Prayer

Prayer

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Introduction

This material for a study of Prayer was originally developed for a workshop on prayer presented at a women's retreat. Because the topic of prayer is so expansive, even in this short study you will only get a tidbit, a small taste to whet your appetite to learn more. In this book you will

- take a brief look at some necessities, some basics you must have and develop in your life in order to have a life of prayer,
- engage in a short study of a passage of Scripture to observe how a man of God prayed and then
- put what you learned into practice.

This brief study will be a sprint along a short portion of the challenging and extraordinary long-distance racecourse of the subject of prayer. I hope you realize that prayer—learning and doing it—is a life-long venture, not something that will be learned “in a snap.” We must embrace becoming life-long learners. We are all learners together and will be into eternity!

Chapter 1 has five sections, which we have labeled “Sessions,” for you to use daily or weekly in the weeks ahead to work through the Scriptures provided and determine how you will respond in obedience to each one. As stated throughout this book, the purpose of studying the Bible is to learn what God has to say and put it into practice in obedience to his word.

Chapter 2 is an exercise to help you better see what is in the passage of Scripture printed out for you; better see what it teaches about God, ourselves, and how to pray. You will work through the passage of Scripture to see for yourselves how a man who loved and served God, prayed. In doing that, you will also learn one method of Bible study that can help you learn better.

In Chapter 3, you will put into practice what you learned about prayer, by praying. Bible study is of no value to us if we do not take what we have learned and act on it.

At the back of this book, you will find Methods of Bible Study. It is a compilation of various methods for studying the Bible. It is provided to use with many of the Scriptures included in the Sessions of this study as well as in your own further study of the Scriptures. These study methods are simple yet powerful tools for better understanding God's Word. It is from the Scriptures that we learn truths about prayer, and every other aspect of living with and for God.

Finally, the End Notes. These are source citations for the quotes used throughout the study.

With the Word of God our curriculum, the Holy Spirit our teacher, and daily life our schoolroom we can excel, in community with other learners in that school of life, as students of Jesus. Our hope is that you will use this material for further study, learning, and implementation in your quest to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

“To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18 NASB).

Chapter 1

Session 1

Some Foundational Necessities for prayer.

PRAYER IS RELATIONAL

Just as talking with another person is relational so talking with God is relational. God is a person and we communicate with him by talking; we call talking to God, prayer.

At one time, early in our human history our first father and mother, Adam and Eve, talked and strolled amiably with God as a matter of course in their everyday lives. They had a relationship with God that was natural and uninhibited.

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool [afternoon breeze] of the day,

Then sin entered through their defiance of God's one command and everything changed.

so the man and his wife hid and kept themselves hidden from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8 AMP)

God created Adam and Eve with the capacity to communicate directly with him and they lived in an open and trusting relationship with God. God's Presence was with them, and they enjoyed being with him. Tragically, because of the entrance of sin, Adam, Eve, and all people subsequently born into this world lost all we had in the Garden, notably this intimate relationship with God. Now we must come into relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son, and his work on Calvary. To do so, we must acknowledge that:

- we are sinners under the death penalty of sin (Genesis 3; Romans 6:23)
- we are helpless to deliver ourselves from sin's death penalty and are in need of a deliverer (Romans 5:6)
- Jesus is that deliverer who took our sins and our sentence of death on himself, dying on the cross and (John 3:16; Romans 5:8)
- by rising from the dead, Jesus offers forgiveness of sins and everlasting life to all who will believe in him (1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 1:5-6).

When we believe Jesus as our Savior and Lord, God the Father begins the restoration of Relationship with him. He adopts us into his family declaring us his children, and we can call him Father.

[Have you made that transaction with God? Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ alone to deliver you from your sins, from the death penalty of sin, give you eternal life, and restore a relationship

with God? If not, do that right now and catch up with the lesson when that important business is finished.]

Jesus taught us to pray emphasizing our new relationship with God:

Our Father in heaven,

may your name be kept holy.

May your Kingdom come soon.

May your will be done on earth,

as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need,

and forgive us our sins,

as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

And don't let us yield to temptation,

but rescue us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:9–13 NLT, emphasis added)

When God is our Father, we can come to him as his children, something we will talk about later.

Session 2

Prayer has many forms—petition, supplication, intercession— but they all have the same basic requirements. To talk—to pray—with God our Father we must be:

HUMBLE, TEACHABLE, WILLING TO SUBMIT

Humble:

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you except to be just, and to love [and to diligently practice] kindness (compassion), and to *walk humbly* with your God [setting aside any overblown sense of importance or self-righteousness]? (Micah 6:8 AMP, emphasis added)

Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and *what is the place of my rest?* All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But *this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.* (Isaiah 66:1–2 ESV, emphasis added)

For this is what the high and exalted One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is *contrite and lowly in spirit*, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. (Isaiah 57:15 NIV, emphasis added).

Blessed are the *poor in spirit* for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3 ESV, emphasis added; the *humble-minded*, Phillips translation)

Read each verse above asking and answering these questions:

What do these verses teach about God? About humans?

What must I do to obey these Scriptures? Be specific.

Teachable:

The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:

To know wisdom and instruction,

to understand words of insight,

to *receive instruction* in wise dealing ...

Let the wise hear and increase in learning. (Proverbs 1:1-3, 5 ESV, emphasis added)

Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes,

And I will [steadfastly] observe it to the end. (Psalm 119:33 AMP, emphasis added)

Blessed and reverently praised are You, O Lord;

Teach me Your statutes. (Psalm 119:12 AMP)

Let me know Your ways, O Lord;

Teach me Your paths.

Guide me in Your truth and teach me,

For You are the God of my salvation;

For You [and only You] I wait [expectantly] all the day long. (Psalm 25:4-5 AMP)

Again, read each verse or set of verses above asking and answering these questions:

What do these verses teach about God? About humans?

What must I do to obey these Scriptures? Be specific.

Submissive:

Likewise, you who are younger, *be subject* to the elders. *Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another*, for ‘God opposes the proud but *gives grace to the humble.*’ *Humble yourselves*, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:5–7 ESV, emphasis added)

Peter was speaking “to the elders among you ... God’s flock” (1 Peter 5:1–2).

What do these verses teach us about God? _____

From these verses, who are Christians (God’s flock) to be subject (submissive) to? (1 Peter 5:5, 6)

- a. “You who are younger, be subject to the elders” _____
- b. “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another” _____
- c. “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God” _____

What do these verses mean for you today? _____

How will these truths affect or change how you relate to God and other Christians?

What changes, if any, will you need to make to be obedient to these verses?

Going back to the fourth verse under “Humble” at the beginning of this Session, we are reminded of Jesus’ words, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3), pointing out the fact that we *are* spiritually poor. This is our spiritual state.

However, we must *recognize* our spiritual poverty and be humble, teachable, and submissive to God and his Word. We are not our own saviors; we cannot save ourselves. We should take serious warning from Jesus’ words to the church (the people of God) in Laodicea:

“Because you are lukewarm (spiritually useless), and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth [rejecting you with disgust]. Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have prospered and grown wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and *poor* and blind and naked [without hope and in great need]” (Revelation 3:16-17 AMP, emphasis added).ⁱ

What does the preceding passage of Scripture teach us about the Laodicean church’s perceptions of their spiritual state? _____

What do those verses teach us about Jesus’ perception and reaction to their spiritual state?

Read Revelation 3:18–22. What did Jesus tell them to do in because of their real spiritual state?

What did you learn from these verses in The Revelation? How will that affect your ideas and actions about how you relate to God?

Jesus gave us an excellent picture of the kind of person *not* to be and the kind of person we *should be* both towards others and in our approach to God in prayer. Listen in:

Then he gave this illustration to certain people who were confident of their own goodness and looked down on others: "Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one was a Pharisee, the other was a tax-collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed like this with himself, 'O God, I do thank you that I am not like the rest of mankind, greedy, dishonest, impure, or even like that tax-collector over there. I fast twice every week; I give away a tenth-part of all my income.'

But the tax-collector stood in a distant corner, scarcely daring to look up to Heaven, and with a gesture of despair, said, 'God, have mercy on a sinner like me.'

I assure you that he was the man who went home justified in God's sight, rather than the other one. For everyone who sets himself up as somebody will become a nobody, and the man who makes himself nobody will become somebody." (Jesus recorded in Luke 18:9-14 PHILLIPS)

What does this passage teach you? _____

How will this make a difference in your thoughts about others and yourself as you stand before God and approach him in prayer?

Jesus personally set us the example of humility toward God, in life and prayer:

In the days of His earthly life, Jesus offered up both [specific] petitions and [urgent] supplications [for that which He needed] with fervent crying and tears to the One who was

[always] able to save Him from death, and *He was heard because of His reverent submission toward God* [His sinlessness and His unfailing determination to do the Father's will].

(Hebrews 5:7 AMP, emphasis added)

What does the above verse teach about God the Father? _____

What does it teach about Jesus? _____

What does it teach about how you should pray?

What will you do to obey what you learned? _____

With that model before him, Paul calls all believers to that same higher standard of living, recorded in his letter to the Philippian church.

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love [agape love: self-sacrificing love], being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

And Paul gives us the perfect picture of how to get there.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself

by becoming obedient to death—

even death on a cross!

Humility always brings a reward. God promised it and he is faithful to his word.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place (1Peter 5:6)
 and gave him the name that is above every name,
 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
 to the glory of God the Father. (Isaiah 45:23)

Based on these truths, Paul says faithfully keep on.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you *to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose*. Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. (Philippians 2:1–16 NIV, emphasis added)

For each Scripture section from Philippians you read above (which started at the bottom of page 12), write in the space under it what you learned from that passage. Then answer the question, What will I do to put what I learned into practice?

Our humility toward others reveals our humility toward God.

Session 3

In prayer we must be:

DEPENDENT, HELPLESS, AND TRUSTING (FAITH)

Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. (Mark 10:15 ESV)

Jesus tells us to be childlike—dependent, helpless, and trusting—in our approach to our Heavenly Father. But he is not telling us to be *childish*, which is “marked by or suggestive of immaturity and lack of poise.”¹ Childishness is vastly different from *childlikeness*.

Very young children cannot do the smallest thing for themselves. As we approach God in prayer, we must realize that this is our spiritual state before him. We are needy. We cannot do life, and especially prayer, without him!

We can't rely on our own intellect, human wisdom, education, or our good looks to get us through life. We will fail. When we are helpless and dependent, like a little child, we realize we need someone trustworthy to rely on. Thank God, we can trust confidently in him.

Trust in and rely confidently on the LORD with all your heart

And do not rely on your own insight or understanding.

In all your ways know and acknowledge and recognize Him,

And He will make your paths straight and smooth [removing obstacles that block your way].

(Proverbs 3:5-6 AMP)

What do the above verses tell us to do?

What do they tell us *not* to do? _____

What do they tell us about God? _____

Do you need to change anything about the way you relate to God and if so, what will change?

¹ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, © 2019 Merriam-Webster, Incorporated. All rights reserved.
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/childish>

Trust develops and deepens over time. We learn God is trustworthy by taking steps of faith to trust him. When we do step out in faith to obey the Lord, we find he is faithful and trustworthy. That frees us from our own fears so we may take bigger, more confident steps of faith.

To trust God is to exercise faith in him and ...

Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6 ESV)

Session 4

We must learn to:

PRAY IN SPIRIT. PRAY IN TRUTH. PRAY PERSISTENTLY.

In spirit

But a time is coming and is already here when the true worshipers will worship the Father *in spirit* [from the heart, the inner self] and *in truth*; for the Father seeks such people to be His worshipers.

God is spirit [the Source of life, yet invisible to mankind], and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:23–24 AMP, emphasis added)

When we believe and trust in Jesus Christ to be our savior and Lord, our spirits are made alive and indwelt by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit of God is the only spirit who should influence us! (Ephesians 2:1–6; 4:22–24, 30; 5:17–18).

How can we know the difference between the voice of the Spirit of God and our own voice in our head? God has given us the written record of his Word. He has spoken. The Written Word of God, the Living Word of God, which is Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God will always agree and never contradict one another. If we honestly hold up our feelings and thoughts to be judged by God's Word, God's Holy Spirit will give affirmation of his voice. By this means, subjecting our inner thoughts and feelings to the Word of God, we can discern the will of God (also see Romans 12:1–2).

We communicate with God through our spirits, our hearts. Our words are important to a point, but sometimes we don't have the words to pray. Have you ever come to the end of yourself and admitted you just didn't know what to pray? I have. All I could do is cry out to God through my tears. I had no words. Yet I knew I was heard. God heard my heart. When we are in that place, God's Spirit prays for us.

God is the one who searches and knows the hearts of people (Jeremiah 17:9–10). Even when we don't know our own hearts, God does know and he responds to our true needs and answers our prayers according to his will, not necessarily to what our words say to him.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but *the Spirit himself intercedes for us* with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26–27 ESV, emphasis added)ⁱⁱ

What do these verses teach about God's Holy Spirit?

How does that affect the way you pray? _____

Not only does the Holy Spirit pray for us, but Jesus also intercedes for us.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5 KJV)

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (Romans 8:34)

Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. (Hebrews 7:24–26 NIV)

What do you learn about Jesus from the verses above (1 Timothy, Romans, and Hebrews verses)?

How do these truths affect how you pray? _____

We can come with confidence before God the Father on his throne of grace because Jesus, as our perfect High Priest, stands advocating for us before the Father.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:14–16 NIV)

What do you learn from these verses? What one thing stands out the most?

How will this truth change how you pray or how you view God?

In truth

Jesus asked the Father to “sanctify them [Jesus’ followers] by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17 NIV, emphasis added).

The Preacher of Proverbs, teaching his sons the words of God, told them, “Do not let mercy and kindness and *truth* leave you [instead let these qualities define you]; Bind them [securely] around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart” (Proverbs 3:3 AMP, emphasis added).

What does this verse teach us about mercy and kindness and truth? _____

What will you do to put that teaching into practice in your life? _____

We must worship and pray in truth, God’s truth revealed in Scripture and by his Spirit. We must also guard our hearts from false teachings, which are not truth.

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. But in vain do they worship me, for *they teach as doctrines the precepts of men*. (Matthew 15:8–9 AMP, emphasis added).

We are responsible to test all things and hold to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). We learn “what is good” from the Word of God and should be growing and getting stronger in the faith every day by living in obedience to God’s Word (Hebrews 5:11–14).

The works of His hands are *truth* and justice;

All His precepts are sure.

They are upheld forever and ever;

They are performed in *truth* and uprightness.

... Holy and awesome is His name.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;

A good understanding have all those who do His commandments;

His praise endures forever. (Psalm 111:7–10 NASB, emphasis added)

If we [claim to] live by the [Holy] Spirit, we must also walk by the Spirit [with personal integrity, godly character, and moral courage—our conduct empowered by the Holy Spirit]. (Galatians 5:25 AMP)

Work through each of the above passages, *using one of the Bible study methods* described in the back of this book. **On the lines below, write out *what you learned* from each set of verses and *what you will do* to obey what God taught you.**

John 17:17

Proverbs 3:3

Matthew 5:8-9

Hebrews 5:11-14

Psalms 111:7-10

Galatians 5:25

Pray Persistently

Jesus taught his followers through a parable

To the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'"

And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? (Luke 18:1-8 ESV)

Use Bible study method #15 from the back of this book. When you are finished, tell someone what you did, what you learned, and what you said you'd do to obey the Lord ("I will"). Ask them to hold you accountable to do it. Be sure to follow through with your "I will"!

It is so vitally important to understand the overarching purposes of God, which he has revealed throughout Scripture. When we pray, we must seek the mind and will of God in and for our particular circumstances, not insist on our own ideas of what he should do. Our faith must not be in our own ideas, but in the God who is who he says he is:

The LORD passed before him [Moses] and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty ..." (Exodus 34:6-7 ESV, emphasis added)

What is God like, according to these verses? _____

How does that change or enhance your understanding of who God is? _____

How can you obey these truths? How will this knowledge change how you pray? _____

Session 5

Although this session comes last in order, it is truly first in importance. We consider the following character traits foundational—essential—and we must develop them in obedience to the commands of God to have a true prayer life with him. What are these essentials?

LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE

It is in our passion for God that our prayer lives develop. (Watson and Watson)ⁱⁱⁱ

Jesus replied to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul, and with *all* your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for others].’ (Matthew 22:37-39 AMP, emphasis added)

In Matthew 22:37, Jesus quoted part of the verses below when an expert in the Law of Moses asked him what the greatest commandment was:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the Lord your God with *all* your heart and with *all* your soul and with *all* your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deuteronomy 6:4–7 ESV, emphasis added)

What do the verses above teach us? What do they tell us to *do*?

What did you learn, in particular?

What will you do to be obedient to what God taught you?

I remember when I used to pray through my prayer list but after only a few times, felt such a failure. There was no passion for what I was praying about. I cried out to the Lord, “God, I can’t do this! I can’t pray for people this way, it’s so dead feeling to me. These burdens must be in my heart!”

I recognized I did not and could not love people well enough with my puny natural love. I need the love of God for others! I need the love of God pouring through me to those who need it. That is exactly what the Holy Spirit does for us.

We can love with God’s love “because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:5 ESV). Love for God and love for our neighbor.

So what do we need to do? “Fix our eyes on Jesus ...” (Hebrews 12:2). We cannot pray, love, or live this life of love for God and our neighbor outside of complete and total abandon to God!

Focus in Prayer

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, *fixing our eyes on Jesus*, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For *consider Him* who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1–3 AMP, emphasis added)

Use one of the Bible study methods from the back of the book to examine closely what these verses teach.

What did you learn from these verses?

What will you do to obey God’s word?

As our love for God grows, our desire to do what he wants will grow as well. Then what God wants will become what we want and we will pray accordingly.

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires and petitions of your heart.

(Psalm 37:4 AMP)

When our delights are right, our desires will be right. We can be assured God hears those prayers.

A growing love for God deepens, enriches, and expands our times in prayer with God. This is true worship, our total abandon to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

Don't look for an "experience" in prayer. Listen instead for what the Father says, and do it.

Supplemental reading: John 14:10, 12-14, 15-17, 21, 23, 26; John 15; John 16:7-11, 13-15; 23-24, 26-27, 33.

Chapter 2

The point of Bible study is to learn from God and put into practice what we learn.

In Bible study we will be challenged by the choice to obey or disobey what we learn.

Jesus said, “Therefore, everyone who **hears these words** of Mine **and acts on them** will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock. ... It didn’t collapse, because its foundation was on the rock.

But everyone who **hears these words** of Mine **and doesn’t act on them** will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ... It collapsed. And its collapse was great!” (Matthew 7:24–28 HCSB).

After hearing (or reading) the teachings of Jesus, the operative words above are “acted on them.” The opposite of acting on is *not* acting on Jesus’ words and teachings. The teachings of Jesus, who is the living Word of God, are consistent with the whole of the written Word of God.

Let’s make this our prayer whenever we come to the Word of God:

Open my eyes so that I may contemplate
wonderful things from Your instruction.
(Psalm 119:18 HCSB)

The following is an invitation to learn about God, about human beings (you and me), and about how to pray. On the next page, Psalm 86 is printed out for you. First read the psalm and then

- **Underline** words and phrases the psalmist uses to tell *what God is like and what he does*.

Example: For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving (v. 5).

Next, read through the psalm again and

- **Circle** phrases and words the psalmist uses to show *what humans are like or do*. Example: (I am poor and needy) (v. 1).

After that, make notes in the margins of *how* he prayed, noting

- *what* the psalmist *asked God for* or *asked him to do* and
- *what he told God* (what the psalmist declared about God and what he knew God could do).

(Don’t worry about phrases that don’t seem to fit any category.)

Psalm 86: 1-13, 15-16

- 1 Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy.
- 2 Preserve my life, for I am godly;
save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.
- 3 Be gracious to me, O Lord,
for to you do I cry all the day.
- 4 Gladden the soul of your servant,
for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
- 5 For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.
- 6 Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;
listen to my plea for grace.
- 7 In the day of my trouble I call upon you,
for you answer me.
- 8 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord,
nor are there any works like yours.
- 9 All the nations you have made shall come
and worship before you, O Lord,
and shall glorify your name.
- 10 For you are great and do wondrous things;
you alone are God.
- 11 Teach me your way, O Lord,
that I may walk in your truth;
unite my heart to fear your name.
- 12 I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name forever.
- 13 For great is your steadfast love toward me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. ...
- 15 But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
- 16 Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant.

On the lines below, list the words/characteristics from your underlined and (circled) words and phrases. Write the reference verse (example: v. 1) in the margin next to each entry.

What God is like/he has done, will do

Underlined words/phrases

What humans are like/do

(Circled words/phrases)

Next, consider how the psalmist prayed. From your list, what did he ask of God and what did he tell God about what he knew about God and his works?

Now read the psalm as though you were the psalmist. Personalize it. Then write on the lines below:

- what you learned about God,
- what you learned about yourself (as though you were the psalmist), and
- what you learned about how the psalmist prayed.

Based on what you learned from God's Word (see above),

- what will you do differently in the way you pray?

Chapter 3

What is the point of Bible study? The point of Bible study is to learn from God and put into practice what we learn (Matthew 7:24).

Now put into practice what you learned about prayer from the exercise with Psalm 86.

Write out what you prayed about so you can later record God's answers.

Bible Study Methods^{iv}

This Bible study uses one method of several simple methods or techniques to help you get a better understanding of what the verses and passages of the Bible actually say. Below is a closer look at techniques that you could use in your personal, ongoing times of study of the Bible.

1. Read and re-read the verse or passage of Scripture throughout the week. This is probably the most important technique for getting a good grasp of the Scriptures as you study.
2. Memorize Scripture. The value of this discipline cannot be over-estimated. When we get the Word into our minds, it can get down into our hearts and the Spirit can bring it out to:
 - a. Recall it to mind as we read other passages of Scripture. Comparing Scripture with Scripture gives us enlightenment and understanding of the Word. "The unfolding of Your words gives light, it gives understanding ..." (Psalm 119:130).
 - b. Guide our decisions. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).
 - c. Keep us from sin. "Your word have I treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11).
 - d. Enable us to use pertinent Scripture at crucial points in conversation. "Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances" (Proverbs 25:11).
3. Use more than one reliable^v Bible translation or version to get a fuller grasp of the meaning of the verse or passage of Scripture.
4. Circle, underline, or highlight repeated words or phrases, or groups of similar words such as nouns, verbs, or adjectives. This helps us categorize valuable information about the subject(s) of our study, such as learning what God is like or what we humans are like (attributes and characteristics).
5. Note the direct commands; these are our "To Do's" in Scripture.
6. Write out the commands found in the verses, what our responses to them should be, and why we should respond that way (I Should/So That).
7. Write down contrasts, such as Philippians 3:7–14, contrasting these with verses 18–19 of the same chapter.
8. Write down what you learned from the Scripture when you circled or underlined words or phrases. Listing these words is a simple way of seeing what is in the verse or passage.
9. List cause and effect such as, "Since God Is/Does," "I Will/Can." This practice solidifies what your desired response should be to that Scripture.
10. Group together verses or sections of Scripture that deal with a similar topic.
11. Use a concordance to look up a word you recall from a verse to aid in locating that verse in the Bible. It is best to use a concordance that is in the same version as the Bible you are using so that the same words used in that translation of the Scripture can be found in the concordance (e.g. King James or NIV, etc.).
12. Use study tools like *Mounce's Interlinear for the Rest of Us*. This reverse Interlinear English/Greek testament shows the original Greek or Aramaic words used in the New Testament and their meanings.

13. Personalize the Psalms as you read them. Make the psalmist's prayers your own.
14. Pray the prayers in the Bible. As you read Scripture, highlight whole prayers you come across and incorporate these into your prayers.
15. The Three-Column Study^{vi} Turn an 8 ½" X 11" paper sideways (Landscape orientation) and divide it, using two vertical lines, into three columns. Write headings for each column starting with the left side column and moving to the right: Scripture/My Words/"I will." Use a passage of Scripture of 10-15 verses and write out the passage by hand in the left column labeled "Scripture." When that is complete, write the passage in your own words in the middle column labeled "My words." Finally, in the far right column labeled, "I will," write down what you will do in obedience to what God taught you from the passage of Scripture. Then do it.

If all this seems daunting, start with one thing, and at your own pace add other methods to your routine. The point of all this is to enhance your times in the Word with our Lord so you can rightly put the Word into practice. God's Spirit is our teacher and we, like all students, must listen and learn well, using the best tools and methods of study at our disposal.

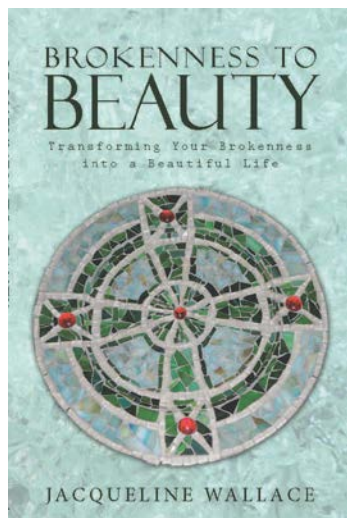
It takes effort and diligence to be a good student of the Scriptures, but it is well worth the time and effort because by our study we can come to know *about* him, and by the transforming power of God's Word come to *really know* him and live a life worthy of him, pleasing our heavenly Father.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

"Therefore we also have as our ambition ... to be pleasing to him" (2Corinthians 5:9).

Other books by Jacqueline Wallace:

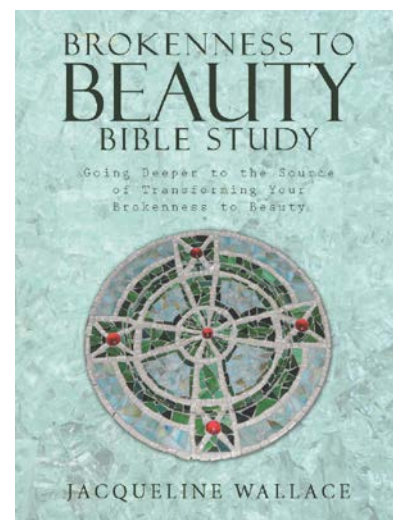
Words of praise for *Brokenness to Beauty* and *Brokenness to Beauty Bible Study*:



With empathy, candor and great depth, Jacqueline Wallace tackles the difficult subject of dealing with long-term trials in the form of illness. She speaks with the kind of authority that is only forged in the flames of human suffering, yet she does so with a gracious voice. I would highly recommend this lovely book to anyone who has wrestled in the dark pit of infirmity and its accompanying discouragement. Jacqueline's practical encouragement and her powerful testimony will be like wind beneath your wings.—Susanne Maynes, Author of *Unleashing Your Courageous Compassion* and *Releasing Your Brave Love*.

I have been doing Bible studies for decades and the *Brokenness to Beauty Bible Study* is one of the best I've seen. It is deep without being difficult and, since we all go through times of brokenness, it is practical as well. It's the kind of Bible study that can change your life from the inside out. But even better is that it's the Companion Bible Study to the book, *Brokenness to Beauty*. They are designed to go hand in hand. You read chapters of the book at the start of each week and then you delve into relevant passages of the Bible and are led into deep personal application. It is such a treat to read about the author's life and lessons learned and then to study Scripture that augments those lessons and helps you apply them to your own life. Highly recommended!

—Robin Chalk



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End Notes

ⁱ Sam Storms, <https://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/44--hot--cold--or-lukewarm--revelation-3:15-16->

ⁱⁱ John Piper on selected Romans 8 verses, <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/the-spirit-helps-us-in-our-weakness>

ⁱⁱⁱ Watson and Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, page 69.

^{iv} Jacqueline Wallace, Bible Study Methods, adapted from *Brokenness to Beauty Bible Study*.

^v Beware, there are unreliable “translations” and versions of the Holy Bible. Do your homework diligently.

^{vi} Watson and Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, page 154.