

GROWING DISCIPLES –Pray In Faith

Week 5: Petition

"Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you"—Matthew 7:7

OVERVIEW OF WEEK 5

Day 1: Asking for Yourself

Day 2: A Model for Petition

Day 3: Following Your Father's Leading

Day 4: Praying for Yourself

Day 5: Asking Others to Pray for You

VERSE TO MEMORIZE

"Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).

DISCIPLESHIP HELPS FOR WEEK 5

"Prayers of Petition"

PREVIEW OF WEEK 5

Petition is asking for yourself, your family, your group, or your church. Your Heavenly Father leads your personal petition to mold you into the person He wants you to be. This week we will—

- learn that God invites personal petition;
- use biblical examples to identify the kinds of petition that God invites, hears, and answers;
- understand God's purpose in helping you become the kind of person He desires;
- realize the importance of asking others to pray for you;
- learn ways to be specific in praying for others.

Day 1: Asking for Yourself

Today's Prayer Promise

"We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us approach the throne of

grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

During these final two weeks you will study the asking prayers in more detail. This week's lessons will focus on petition; next week's, on intercession. Before we begin a detailed look at petition, review last week's lessons.

① In week 4 page 3 read again the Scriptures under "God Invites Asking."

② In week 4 page 4-5 read the eight reasons God answers prayer. Which two are most encouraging, meaningful, or helpful in your own praying? Write them below.

③ Name four reasons God doesn't answer prayer. Week 4 Day 3 pp. 6-8 if you need help.

④ On week 4 pp. 8-11 read the 10 principles for asking. In which principle do you most need improvement for the sake of your prayer life?

⑤ Of the following areas, on which one do you most need to work to improve your praying in agreement with God? Check one.

- a. Getting into agreement with God
- b. Getting into agreement with others
- c. Understanding God's desires for a particular request
- d. Praying with others long enough to agree together

Petition is asking for yourself, your family, your church, or your group. You might think that the great prayer warriors of the Bible did not emphasize personal petition. Yet many of them made personal petitions. In Genesis 15:2 Abram (later Abraham) asked God for a son. In 1 Samuel

1:10-11 Hannah prayed for a son. King Hezekiah was dying and prayed to live (see 2 Kings 20:1-3). Zechariah and Elizabeth prayed for a child (see Luke 1:13). God heard and answered all of these personal petitions.

Abram

"Abram said, 'Lord God, what can You give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?'" (Genesis 15:2).

Hannah

"Deeply hurt, Hannah prayed to the LORD and wept with many tears. Making a vow, she pleaded, 'LORD of Hosts, if You will take notice of Your servant's affliction, remember and not forget me, and give Your servant a son, I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life'" (1 Samuel 1:10-11).

Hezekiah

"In those days Hezekiah became terminally ill. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came and said to him, 'This is what the LORD says: "Put your affairs in order, for you are about to die; you will not recover."' Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, 'Please LORD, remember how I have walked before You faithfully and wholeheartedly and have done what is good in Your sight.' And Hezekiah wept bitterly" (2 Kings 20:1-3).

Zechariah

"The angel said to him: Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John" (Luke 1:13).

6 Based on these biblical examples, which of the following is true?

- a. Personal petition is selfish. God doesn't want us to pray for personal concerns.
- b. Personal petition is acceptable to the Lord since He answers and even encourages these personal requests.

The examples in the Bible indicate that God is pleased to hear your personal requests. God's purpose in encouraging petition is to mold you into a certain kind of person. In each example above, the person praying was in the process of becoming a more godly person. Abraham didn't just receive a son; God gave him a nation. Hannah was becoming a certain kind of person when she prayed for a son, for motherhood changes the character of a woman of God. Hezekiah became one of Israel's greatest kings.

⑦ What is a primary purpose in God's encouraging personal petition?

In each case of personal petition above, not only the person but also God's work and kingdom benefited. Abraham's prayer resulted in the chosen race that would prepare the way for Christ. Hannah's prayer gave to Israel Samuel, a great judge and the first prophet. Because he did not die as soon as predicted, Hezekiah lived to father Manasseh. In so doing, he preserved the messianic line of David that led to the birth of Jesus. God shapes your character and uses you to join His kingdom work.

↕ Close today's study by thanking your Father for specific ways He has helped you become the person He wants you to be. Ask Him to continue showing you direction for your life. Begin to fix your thoughts on Jesus—your perfect example of godly living.

Day 2: A Model for Petition

Today's Prayer Promise

"When he calls out to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble.
I will rescue him and give him honor" (Psalm 91:15).

Petition God for your personal needs. Jesus taught this practice to His disciples. In the Model Prayer, after the prayer for God's honor and kingdom, Jesus authorized a series of personal requests.

① Read the Model Prayer below. Underline the three personal requests in verses 11-13.

⁹ Our Father in heaven, Your name be honored as holy.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And do not bring us into temptation,

but deliver us from the evil one (Matthew 6:9-13).

Jesus taught us to pray for daily food, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from temptation and the evil one. These represent three general areas in which God is interested:

- Your physical needs
- Restored fellowship with Him if you have broken it
- Protection from forces beyond your control

Jesus wants you to pray for physical needs. But you are not encouraged to pray for every want or fleshly desire. In fact, too much material wealth can lead you away from God (see Proverbs 30:7-9 below) if you are not very careful. God knows your needs and considers your motives (see James 4:3 below). He makes no promises for selfish or greedy requests.

"Two things I ask of You; don't deny them to me before I die: Keep falsehood and deceitful words far from me. Give me neither poverty nor wealth; feed me with the food I need. Otherwise, I might have too much and deny You, saying, 'Who is the LORD?' or I might have nothing and steal, profaning the name of my God."—Proverbs 30:7-9

"You ask and don't receive because you ask wrongly, so that you may spend it on your desires for pleasure."—James 4:3

God wants to have intimate fellowship with you. When you sin, the fellowship is broken. Confession of the sin begins the process of restoring this fellowship. You must also seek His forgiveness and turn away from your sin.

Temptation (see Matthew 6:13) can refer to an enticement to sin or to a trial or testing. God promises that He will not allow you to be tested beyond what you can endure (see 1 Corinthians 10:13 below). He will offer you a way out. You can and should ask God for that deliverance.

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape, so that you are able to bear it."—1 Corinthians 10:13

↕ **Pause and pray these three requests for yourself: physical needs, restored fellowship with God, and protection from evil and temptation.**

② **Read the sample prayers of petition below. Underline the petitions that would be meaningful for you to pray for yourself or for your group. Write one of your own petitions below.**

Sample Prayers of Petition

- Heavenly Father, I am Your child.
- Father, I want to be like You. I want to be like Jesus. Teach me to be [name desired characteristics].
- Fill me with Your Holy Spirit.
- Bring glory to Yourself in my body and in my spirit.
- Guide me to know the way I am to go.
- Lord, give me a spirit of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and reverence for You.

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Ask for guidance. Jesus Himself practiced the principle of praying for personal needs. Jesus often prayed for guidance. The night before He chose the twelve disciples, Jesus spent the entire night in prayer (see [Luke 6:12-13](#)). When the time came to expand His ministry, Jesus arose early in the morning and prayed in "a deserted place" ([Mark 1:35](#)). Jesus' prayers demonstrate that divine guidance is available through prayer.

③ Do you have a specific need for God's guidance in an area of your life or work? Describe your need. Then pray for God's guidance.

Ask for wisdom. Another personal petition often found in Scripture is for wisdom. Asking for wisdom is appropriate: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him" ([James 1:5](#)).

Ask that His will be done. Personal requests should grow from a personal relationship with the Lord. Consider the way God views your personal requests. Think of two personal requests you have made recently or could make today. Prayerfully trace what would happen in the Kingdom or for God's honor if those requests were granted. Learn to say, "Thy Kingdom come in the granting of [specific personal request]." Be alert to ways your Father wants you to become a more godly person.

↕ **Close today's lesson with a time of personal petition.**

My Petition

Day 3: Following Your Father's Leading

Scripture-Memory Verse

"Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you" ([Matthew 7:7](#)).

You may not respond to a stranger who delivers a telephone sales pitch. But if you are a parent and the voice in the receiver calls out, "Dad" or "Mom," you will probably make time, even if your schedule is tight. Similarly, God answers prayer because of who you are in relation to Him.

After His resurrection Jesus told Mary Magdalene, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father—to My God and your God" (John 20:17). Can you imagine Mary's feelings when Jesus included her in His family relationship with the Father? In the Model Prayer Jesus also commanded you to pray to God as Father (see Matthew 6:9). You are included too! This relationship between you as a child and your Heavenly Father ought to influence the way you pray. You make your requests of a giving Father.

① Read James 1:17 and Matthew 7:7-11 below. What kind of gifts come down from the Father of heaven?

"Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."—James 1:17

"Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What man among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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 7:7-11

② Which of the following describes the kind of gifts God gives?

- a. God gives things that I don't ask for and that will harm me or fail to meet my needs.
- b. God gives good gifts that will meet my needs. He gives what I ask according to His will.

God is your Heavenly Father, who wants you to develop according to the plans He has for you. He cares what you become. He encourages personal petition to help you become the person He wants you to be. One day you will reign with Christ (see Revelation 5:10 below). God does not want you to be petty or immature. You are royalty and nobility! Your personal petitions should be directed by the Holy Spirit as He reveals the kind of person you are to become—a witness, a Kingdom worker, a giver, a godly parent or spouse, or one who offers praise to Him in prayer.

"You made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth."—Revelation 5:10

When you pray as a child to the Heavenly Father, you should emphasize growing spiritually. You may call Him Father as you talk to Him. Pray to become like Him and like Jesus. Pray for a life that represents the Father well. For His sake pray about maintaining your Father's reputation.

Pray for ways to maintain the honor of the family name—Christian—and for characteristics God will develop in you.

③ Read James 3:17 below and underline the character traits (virtues) of godly wisdom. Read Galatians 5:22-23 below and underline the fruit of the Spirit. Read Matthew 5:3-11 below and underline attitudes the Lord blesses.

"The wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy."—James 3:17

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law."—Galatians 5:22-23

"Blessed are the poor in spirit. ...	and thirst for righteousness. ...
Blessed are those who mourn. ...	Blessed are the merciful. ...
Blessed are the gentle. ...	Blessed are the pure in heart. ...
Blessed are those who hunger	Blessed are the peacemakers. ...

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness."—Matthew 5:3-11

Here are some virtues God wants to develop in your life and attitudes He blesses. Regularly pray for these traits.

Christlike Virtues (James 3:17)

pure	merciful
peace-loving	fruitful
considerate	impartial
submissive	sincere

Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

love	goodness
joy	faithfulness
peace	gentleness
patience	self-control
kindness	

Blessed Attitudes (Matthew 5:3-11)

poor in spirit—dependent on God

meek—humble

merciful—forgiving, caring

peacemaker—reconciler

mourn—need the Comforter

hunger for righteousness

pure in heart—holy, clean

persecuted because of righteousness

Trust, a vital component of a family relationship, is a basis for prayer. On one occasion when some of the Israelites were facing an enemy in battle, "They received help against these enemies, ... because they cried out to God in battle. He granted their request *because they trusted in Him*" (1 Chronicles 5:20, emphasis added). You can trust your Father's leading. What He leads you to become will always be best.

↕ **Pause and pray through the lists of virtues and attitudes you studied today. Ask God to work in you to develop these characteristics. Allow Him to do whatever is necessary to make you the person He wants you to be. The result will always be worth the cost!**

Day 4: Praying for Yourself

Today's Prayer Promise

"All the things you pray and ask for—believe that you have received them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:24).

As you learned last week, you can use prayer lists to help you remember to pray for specific concerns. Today you will prepare lists for personal petition.

Ask your Heavenly Father to guide your requests according to His will and purposes.

① Prepare lists of personal needs or concerns for which you wish to pray. Use the following categories to stimulate your thinking. Ask your Heavenly Father to guide your requests according to His will and purposes for His kingdom and your life.

Virtues or attitudes God wants to develop in me:

Spiritual needs to be restored to fellowship with my Heavenly Father:

Spiritual needs to be reconciled with fellow Christians:

Spiritual growth and maturity:

Being a godly family member:

Being a faithful church member:

Guidance for family, work, church, and ministry:

Strength to overcome temptations:

Deliverance or protection from

Enabling for spiritual ministry:

Power and boldness for witness to

Emotional needs or concerns:

Material or financial needs:

Health-and-fitness needs:

Work concerns:

Others:

List other personal needs or concerns for which you wish to pray here.

↕ **Now take time to pray for some of these requests. Emphasize spiritual concerns in your prayers. If you first seek God's kingdom, many of your needs will also be met. Don't hesitate, however, to pray for your human needs. Your Heavenly Father also cares about them.**

Day 5: Asking Others to Pray for You

Today's Prayer Promise

"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

You might ask, Why should I ask someone else to pray for me? Doesn't God hear my prayers? God wants you to ask others to pray for you, and we have biblical reasons to do so. Paul, for example, was convinced that the prayers of other Christians would strengthen his own prayers. Paul asked the churches of his time to pray with him and for him.

① **Read the Scriptures below. Underline subjects for which Paul wanted others to pray on his behalf.**

"I implore you, brothers, through the Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to agonize together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf."—Romans 15:30

"Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel."—Ephesians 6:19

"Pray for us."—1 Thessalonians 5:25

"Pray for us, brothers, that the Lord's message may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you."—2 Thessalonians 3:1

② Read the following reasons to ask others to pray for you. Draw stars beside the ones that seem most meaningful to you. Ask God to show you why you need the prayers of others.

ASKING OTHERS TO PRAY FOR YOU

1. Shows your dependence on God. God will do some things only in answer to prayer. This way you know that God is the One who provided or acted, and He receives the glory for His actions.

2. Demonstrates lowliness before God and humility before others. Pride keeps you from asking others to pray for you. (See 1 Peter 5:5-7 below.)

"Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, because He cares about you."—1 Peter 5:5-7

3. Brings greater authority to prayer. God grants greater authority to united prayers of agreement: "If two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19).

4. Increases the amount of praying in your behalf. The more persons who pray, the more intercession is made in your behalf.

5. Broadens the understanding of how to pray for your need. Others may know exactly how to pray for you even when you don't. They may have been through the same experience. Their specific prayers may secure God's answer for your need.

6. Blesses those who have the privilege of praying for you. When people pray for you, they receive a blessing. It is multiplied when they learn that God has answered their prayers. Be sure to give reports of answered prayer to those who are enlisted to pray.

7. Strengthens the bond of love between you and those who pray for you. When a person begins to pray intently for another, a bond of love is created or strengthened.

8. Secures strength for an area of personal weakness or failure.

WHEN YOU PRAY FOR OTHERS

Put yourself in the place of the one for whom you are praying.

One need in praying together is praying specific and meaningful prayers. To help focus your prayers, put yourself in the place of the one for whom you are praying so that you can "feel" what she feels. What feelings is she dealing with? Think of problems, conflicts, or pressures the person may face.

If you pray for a person who is grieving over the loss of a spouse, for example, think about the issues the person must deal with. You might pray for the funeral arrangements, the family's travel arrangements, financial needs, loneliness, anger, resentment, bitterness, or a broken heart. You might continue praying about changes the grieving person might confront, reentry into life's routine, or facing holidays. As you mentally place yourself in the circumstances a person faces, you can pray much more specifically, especially if you have faced similar circumstances.

③ Think about the members of your prayer group and personal concerns they have shared in past weeks. Does one person stand out as someone for whom God wants you to pray? Choose one and write his or her name here: _____

④ Try to put yourself in this person's place. List concerns for which you can pray on this person's behalf below.

You may want to pay attention to specific ways you can be part of the answer to your prayers. As you pray, God may give you a burden to help meet a need. Listen for directions God may give you for meeting the person's needs. These impressions often come only during prayer.

↕ Close your study today by praying for the person you have chosen. Pray specifically for the needs or concerns you have listed. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your praying in areas you may not have considered.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYING TOGETHER THIS WEEK

As you pray together, carefully listen for opportunities to respond to others' prayers. If a person makes a personal petition, you might intercede for that need or concern. If a person prays for forgiveness, you might ask the Lord for forgiveness, cleansing, and restoration. If a person asks the Lord a question, be sensitive to the fact that God may speak the answer through you.

Session 5: Petition (Participants Guide)

Opening Prayer

Volunteer to pray sentence prayers of confession, praise, worship, and thanksgiving and if you have a testimony share what God is doing to develop your prayer life or ways He has answered your prayers in a meaningful way.

(Review Week 5 and Share Responses)

1. Which area do you most need to work on so that you can pray in agreement with God? (Day 2 p. 2, activity 5)

2. Why does God encourage you to ask for yourself? (p. 2)

3. What are three general areas in which Jesus encouraged prayer for yourself? (p. 4)

4. What are some of the virtues, fruit, or attitudes God wants to develop in you and about which you can pray? (p. 8)

5. What are some reasons to ask others to pray for you? Which of these have you experienced during the past few weeks and how? (p. 11)

6. What are some ways you can respond to the prayers of others as you pray together? Discuss examples. Pay special attention this week to responding to others' prayers. (p. 13)

Interacting with the Scriptures

1. Quote and write out Matthew 7:7.

2. What verse, prayer promise, or other Scripture has been most meaningful or challenging to you this week and why?

3. What truth about prayer or experience with God in prayer has been most meaningful or practical this week?

This Week's Prayer Focus: Petition and Praying Together

(See Discipleship Helps _ Prayers of Petition for examples and topics.)

A greater portion of our prayer time will be spent on petition. Recall in our study prayer request for personal needs or concerns. Rather than state a request to the group, pray for your own needs or concerns. As you pray for a personal concern, others from your group may join in and pray for and with you. As others pray for personal concerns you join in with them by praying with and for in intercession. You may find that the personal concerns lead you to intercession for related persons or concerns. Give the Holy Spirit great freedom to guide your praying during this session.

Reflection (five min.)

The purpose of the reflection time is not to criticize others but to help one another learn more effective ways to pray together. Use the questions in Discipleship Helps on page 18 to assess the effectiveness of your prayer time. Record any suggestions for improving prayers.

Previewing Week 6

Preview your study for the coming week Petition.

Closing Prayer

If asked volunteer to share what you sense God has done during your prayer time. Ask Him to make our church a house of prayer for the nations.