

STUDIES IN PRAYER

OR

THE PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST IN REGARD TO PRAYER

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FOR BIBLE CIRCLES AND PRIVATE USE

With Appendix: Passages relating to Prayer in the
Four Gospels

LONDON

BRITISH COLLEGE CHRISTIAN UNION

22, WARWICK LANE, E.C.

Price Twopence

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PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. The list of references given in the Appendix is intended to facilitate study: but it will be practically useless unless the verses indicated are studied in relation to their context, and to one another.

2. The first object of these studies is to stimulate *private* study. Each member of a Bible Circle, which is using this text-book, is recommended to make "Prayer" the subject of his private devotional study for the time being.

3. It is quite unnecessary to go over all the ground covered in the text-book at the expense of losing time for unhurried meditation. *Under no circumstances should the whole of one study be discussed at a Bible Circle Meeting:* the leader must select one or two important sections, and guide the discussion upon them.

4. Although the studies are based upon the four Gospels, examples or quotations from other parts of the Bible should occasionally be brought to bear.

5. The studies are meant to stimulate, not to hamper, thought. Questions which seem obscure should be attempted last.

6. Studies VII. and VIII. are shorter than the others, and might be taken together if there are less than nine meetings.

"Lord, teach us to pray."

LITERATURE LIKELY TO PROVE USEFUL.

ANDREW MURRAY.—“With Christ in the School of Prayer.” (B.C.C.U. Office, 2*s.* 2*d.* post free.)

AUSTIN PHELPS.—“The Still Hour.” (B.C.C.U. Office, 6*d.* post free.)

H. C. G. MOULE, D.D.—“Secret Prayer.” (B.C.C.U. Office, 10*d.* post free.)

R. E. SPEER.—“Prayer and Missions.” (B.C.C.U. Office, 2½*d.* post free.)

J. R. MOTT.—“The Secret Prayer Life.” (B.C.C.U. Office, 1½*d.* post free.)

J. R. MOTT.—“Bible Study for Personal Spiritual Growth.” (B.C.C.U. Office, 1½*d.* post free.)

BROTHER LAWRENCE.—“The Practice of the Presence of God.” (B.C.C.U. Office, 6*d.* post free.)

HENRY WRIGHT.—“Secret Prayer a Great Reality.” (B.C.C.U. Office, 1*d.* post free.)

F. R. HAVERGAL.—“One Hour with Jesus.” (B.C.C.U. Office, 1½*d.* post free.)

In the preparation of the following studies, very material assistance was rendered by the co-operation of W. E. S. Holland and J. H. Oldham.

W. H. T. G.

STUDY I.

INCENTIVES TO PRAYER IN THE PRECEPT
AND EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST.

1. Collect the distinct commands to pray. Do they apply universally, or only to particular circumstances?

2. Collect the "precious promises" which should encourage us to prayer.

3. What needs (1) in the Godhead;
(2) in the individual soul;
(3) in the world;

do we find mentioned by Christ as incentives to prayer? For one example of each see Jno. iv. 23; Matt. xxvi. 41; Matt. ix. 38.

4. What needs brought people to Christ with petitions during His life on earth?

This question is more fully dealt with in Study V. Glance cursorily at it here. It helps to show that prayer is a fact.

5. The Fatherhood of God—what incentives to prayer does Christ hold out to us in this one fact?

6. Illustrate from the Gospels the truth, that we may be distinct losers by simply neglecting to pray.

7. Christ prayed. What incentives to prayer may we gather from this one fact?

i.e. Why did Christ pray? Did He *need* to pray? or was it merely to give us an example of prayer? Examine the truth and significance of the following answers to this question:—

“Christ prayed as God;
 as Man;
 as Son;
 as Creature;
 as Mediator;
 as Example.”

This question involves considerations brought up in the last Study, and should be the one to be omitted, if any. The consideration of it, however, inasmuch as it takes us to the very centre of the “mystery” of prayer, will be found to be in turn a great incentive to prayer.

STUDY II.

THE PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST AS TO THE TIME, PLACE, AND ATTITUDE FOR PRAYER.

A.—TIME.

1. Find the times of day when Christ is recorded to have prayed.
2. Does Christ's example encourage ejaculatory prayer?
3. Find out all the occasions on which Christ withdrew for prayer. Endeavour to discover the reason for each of these retirements to pray.

Luke's Gospel will be found a treasure-house for answers to this and the following question.

4. Notice the connection of prayer with the great crises of His life.
5. Note John vi. 15. What is there elsewhere to show that it was in prayer that Christ sought strength to withstand the seductions of popular enthusiasm, and to cleave to the way of the Cross?

6. What does the example of Jesus teach us as to the advantage of having *special seasons* as well as stated times of prayer?

7. What light is thrown upon the bearing of physical weariness on prayer—(a) by the example of Jesus; (b) by His words to the disciples in Matt. xxvi. 40, 41, 43?

8. What is the secret of victory in this most difficult matter?

B.—PLACE.

1. Where do we find Jesus praying?

2. What place for private prayer has His emphatic recommendation?

3. About places specially set apart for prayer:—(a) What goes to show that Jesus sympathised with reverence for and use of such places? (b) What precepts show us that He regarded all places as consecrated places of prayer?

4. What is the peculiar danger of public prayer?

C.—ATTITUDE.

1. What attitude do we find the Lord adopting or mentioning?

2. Can anything be gathered to guide us in this matter?

STUDY III.

THE PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST AS TO THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL PRAYER.

1. Collect from the Gospels all passages on prayer containing the conditional "if," or containing conditions in any way expressed.

2. What general principle or principles can you find underlying these conditions? Verify this by bringing each condition in turn under the general principle which you have discovered.

3. How far do these conditions relate to the state of heart of the petitioner, and how far to the form or manner of the prayer? What is the relative importance of the latter?

4. What condition did the Publican fulfil in Luke xviii. 13? How far is this only a preliminary condition to entering the prayer-life at all, or one which perpetually obtains; that is, how far must all prayer and every petitioner begin with confession of sin?

(1) Glance at the Lord's Prayer to elucidate this.

(2) The study of the order of thought in the Morning and Evening Prayer and the Communion Service of the Church of England Prayer Book is most suggestive here.

5. Bearing the questions thus raised in mind, make a study of the phrase *ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι μου** (a commentary should be consulted to bring this out; e.g. Westcott's St. John, note on xiv. 13, 14), and then study

* The study of this phrase and kindred phrases in the Old Testament and Acts and Epistles would be found most fruitful and suggestive; e.g. Exodus vi. 2, 3; xxxiv. 5, 7; 2 Sam. vi. 2 R. V.; Psalm cxxxviii. 2; Malachi iii. 16; Acts iii. 16; Phil. ii. 9.

the phrase *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*, cp. Matt. xxviii. 19, John i. 12, 1 John v. 13. Would it be true to say that the phrases refer to different stages in, or aspects of, the Christian life? If so, do they throw light upon the question raised above (No. 4)?

6. What further conditions relating to united prayer does Christ add to those He gives for solitary prayer? Master the logic of Matt. xviii. 19, 20. What is the force of that "for"? What does *συμφωνήσωσι* mean? and *συνήγμενοι εἰς τὸ ὄνομά μου*? Cp. Acts i. 14, and ii. 1. *

7. In the light of your conclusions, what is the value of preparation and self-examination before prayer? Where does Christ advocate these?

8. In the light of your conclusions, how do the great doctrines of Atonement and Sanctification bear upon the prayer life?

STUDY IV.

THE PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST AS TO THE OBJECTS AND ELEMENTS OF PRAYER.

1. For what objects are we distinctly bidden to pray? Group these under different headings.
2. What further objects are suggested by the teaching and example of Jesus as legitimate objects of prayer?
3. What requests met with the special approval or disapproval of Jesus?

Do not spend too much time on this; it will be dealt with in Study V.

4. Does Christ put any limitation to the objects for which we may pray?

State the objects (if any) which we are discouraged from praying for. Illustrate from Christ's own prayers.

5. How far can we go in *claiming* the conversion of others? Does the fact that their will is free suggest any limitation in the objects of prayer?

Does John xvii. 9 throw light on this point? Did Christ pray for the world? How did He do so?

It will be instructive to notice what proportion, if any, of the many recorded prayers of St. Paul are for the unconverted?

6. What passages bear upon temporal and material blessings? Are we to pray for them? Examine Matt. xxiv. 20. May any or all of these passages apparently treating of temporal blessings include a spiritual sense?

7. How does the fact of the Fatherhood of God bear on this whole matter? In this relation study carefully the teaching of Matt. vi. 25-34.

8. Is it recorded that Christ ever prayed for temporal or material blessings? What was His attitude towards God about them, judging by the occasions when we find Him concerned with them?

9. Is prayer only petition? (i.e., are we only praying when we are asking for something?). If not, what more is it? What other elements enter into it? Gather passages illustrating your conclusion.

STUDY V.

THE PRAYERS OF OTHERS TO JESUS CHRIST.

1. Gather (rapidly) the successful prayers addressed to the Lord.

Do not try to enumerate all.

2. Find *all* the unsuccessful petitions.

3. Find the partially successful petitions.

4. Use the results of Studies III. and IV. (and possibly II.) to find what it was in—

(1) the petitioners,

(2) the petitions,

that resulted in their failure or their success.

You cannot get through all. Select the most striking examples.

5. Were there any unspoken prayers that were divined, and answered?

6. Were there any prayers which were answered otherwise than they were asked?

Compare the answer to Monica's prayer in Augustine's "Confessions." You might here draw also on the Epistles and Old Testament for illustration.

THE SEQUEL OF ANSWERED PRAYER.

7. Can a prayer once answered be retracted?

There is a parable bearing on this.

8. What should be the sequel of the answered prayer?

There is an instructive example bearing on this point.

STUDY VI.

THE PRAYERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

1. Gather the eight or nine recorded (spoken) prayers of Christ (exclusive of the Lord's Prayer).

2. What is common to all save one in the invocations of these prayers?

3. What is the significance of this exception? See Study III. 8; and Gal. iii. 13, 14, and iv. 4, 5.

It will be instructive in this relation to notice the invocation of the prayer which, as we gather from another evangelist, almost immediately followed the prayer under consideration.

4. What place have adoration and praise in these prayers?

5. Use the results of Studies III. and IV. to find what it was in—

(1) the Petitioner (on each occasion),

(2) the petition,

that brought the answer.

6. In these prayers what precepts of His own does He signally fulfil?

7. In these prayers what goes to show that it was moment by moment true that *ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν* (the Word was *with* God)?

8. What characteristic of Christ's prayers is emphasised in the Epistle to the Hebrews?

STUDY VII.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

1. Compare the two versions in Matt. vi. and Luke xi. (R.V.).

Westcott and Hort or some *critical* Greek Testament must be used for this; and someone should have been asked to consult a commentary upon their comparison, and bring a short account of what he has learned.

2. What drew from the disciples the petition, "Lord, teach us to pray"?

3. Mark carefully the order of petitions. Classify them. Find the order of thought underlying them.

4. What lessons may we learn as to the ordering of our own prayer to God?

5. What does the invocation teach us of the starting point and basis of all prayer?

6. "Thy will be done," cp. Matt. xxvi. 39. Does not this petition let us into the inner nature and the possibility of intercessory prayer? cp. 1 John v. 14, 15, with Rom. viii. 26, 27.

7. The lateness in the prayer of the petition, "Forgive us our sins," and the fact that it opens with the unclouded sense of sonship, are worthy of notice. Is the petition, "Forgive us our sins," etc., a mere confession of sin, or necessarily a confession at all? What else does this petition suggest?

The fulness with which you treat this question will depend very much on the fulness with which you went into Study III. 4.

8. In the light of your conclusions, *for whom* is the Lord's Prayer intended? For anybody and everybody?

STUDY VIII.

THE GREAT INTERCESSION. John xvii.

We are to consider this chapter strictly in its character as a *prayer*, not e.g. as a treasure-house of Christian doctrine.

1. Notice the six-fold invocation.
2. What other traces of petitions summarised in the Lord's Prayer do you find here?
3. What are the main divisions of the prayer, and what are the leading petitions or petition running through it?
4. What do you find in this prayer that could not be uttered in human prayers—that could be the prayer of Christ alone?
5. And yet what is the great doctrine of the chapter that enables Christ's own to pray marvellously much of their Master's prayers? What properties of Christ are we told in this chapter are extended to the Christian?
6. How does this chapter bear on the power and success of united prayer?
7. Examine verse 9. How does this bear on intercessory prayer? What verses in this chapter show that "the world" was *not* out of the Redeemer's thoughts and desires? Cf. Study IV. 6.
8. What is the peculiar interest for us in verses 20-23? * How far is this prayer being fulfilled in the Church and in us? What hinders the fulfilment, and what is the remedy?

* "What if by face and name some of us here gathered had place in that prayer?"

STUDY IX.

THE ULTIMATE GROUND OF PRAYER.

This Study should be taken last of all. Some circles, which would find this Study too abstruse, might well leave it to be worked out in private. The results of all the previous Studies must be recollected. The treatment of this Study should perhaps be more free than the rest, and may be more of the nature of a discussion than the others have been. Do not expect answers *in so many words* from the Gospels, but expect to find at all points the Bible checking and confirming your thoughts.

1. Study I. has shown us that prayer is a *fact* that "will not be put by." But what are the difficulties that beset the idea of prayer? What are your difficulties, or those you have heard urged?

2. What difficulty did Job find—ix. 32-35? How do the Mohammedans, on the one hand, and the Pantheists, such as the Buddhists, on the other, miss the true idea of prayer?

3. How does the revelation of GOD IN CHRIST explain these difficulties and correct these mistakes. Show how they resulted from mistaken notions about God.

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN CHRIST.

John i. 18.

4. How is the central idea of prayer part of the very essence of the Godhead as revealed in Christianity? Does the doctrine of the Trinity help us to understand the nature of prayer? Illustrate this idea from the Apostles and St. John's first chapter.

5. How does the doctrine of God as Creator help us to understand the nature of our prayer? What light do the words in Genesis about the creation of man throw upon this? * What, according to the Bible, was the connection of Christ with creation? † Does

* Gen. i. 26, 27.

† John i. 3 (*διὰ*), Col. i. 15-17.

CHRIST thus help us to understand the possibility of prayer?

6. The grand difficulty to the human mind, however, having been how to span the gulf between God and man, how does the doctrine of the Incarnation help us further to understand the nature and possibility of prayer? Does the *second person of the Trinity* help us to understand?

7. What effect had sin in the prayer-life of humanity? See Genesis iii. 8, and Rom. i. What effect has it (according to Bible words) on the prayer-life of the individual? How does the doctrine of the Atonement help us to understand the possibility of prayer? See Study VI. 3.

8. What is the Church's relation to Jesus Christ? Does the doctrine of Sanctification, does the faith of a risen and ascended Christ help us to understand the possibility of prayer?

9. Does the existence and work of the Holy Spirit help us to understand the possibility of prayer?

10. How does intercessory prayer follow from mere communion? The latter being accepted, does the former present any difficulties?

11. Intercessory prayer raises the grand difficulty of the Freedom of our Will and of the Will of God. But see Study VII. 6. If our studies have shown that the whole of this ancient and vexed question is but part of a larger question still, it will have lost much of its distressing character, and we shall be enabled to view it with that larger view that robs it of its individual mystery and merges it into the final mystery of God and of existence.

**References to Prayer in the four Gospels to be used
with "Studies in Prayer."**

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- Matt. iv. 7 . . . . . Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.  
 Matt. iv. 10 . . . . . Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.  
 Matt. v. 23, 24 . . . If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the  
 Matt. v. 44 . . . . . Pray for them that persecute you. [altar.  
 Matt. vi. 5-8 . . . . . And when ye pray, ye shall not be as.  
 Matt. vi. 9-15 . . . . . After this manner therefore.  
 Matt. vi. 33 . . . . . Seek ye first the kingdom.  
 Matt. vii. 7-11 . . . . . Ask, and it shall be given you.  
     Matt. vii. 2 . . . . . Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me  
     Matt. vii. 5 . . . . . A centurion, beseeching him. [clean.  
     Matt. vii. 21 . . . . . Lord, suffer me first to go.  
     Matt. vii. 25 . . . . . Save, Lord ; we perish.  
     Matt. vii. 31 . . . . . The devils besought him  
     Matt. vii. 34 . . . . . They besought him that he would depart.  
     Matt. ix. 18 . . . . . My daughter is even now dead.  
     Matt. ix. 27 . . . . . Have mercy on us, thou son of David.  
 Matt. ix. 37, 38 . . . . . The harvest truly is plenteous.  
 Matt. xi. 25, 26 . . . . . I thank thee, O Father.  
 Matt. xiv. 19 . . . . . He blessed, and brake.  
 Matt. xiv. 23 . . . . . He went up into the mountain.  
     Matt. xiv. 28 . . . . . Lord, if it be thou.  
     Matt. xiv. 30 . . . . . Lord, save me.  
 Matt. xv. 8, 9 . . . . . This people honoureth me with their lips.  
     Matt. xv. 21-28 . . . . . Have mercy on me, O Lord.  
 Matt. xv. 36 . . . . . He gave thanks, and brake.  
     Matt. xvii. 15 . . . . . Lord, have mercy on my son.  
 Matt. xvii. 19, 20 . . . . . Why could not we cast it out ?  
 Matt. xviii. 19, 20 . . . . . If two of you should agree. [children.  
     Matt. xix. 13-15 . . . . . Then were there brought unto him little  
     Matt. xx. 20-23 . . . . . Then came to him the mother of the sons  
     Matt. xx. 30-34 . . . . . Lord, have mercy on us. [of Zebedee.  
 Matt. xxi. 13 . . . . . My house shall be called.  
 Matt. xxi. 21, 22 . . . . . If ye have faith, and doubt not.  
 (Matt. xxiii. 14 . . . . . For a pretence make long prayer.)  
 Matt. xxiv. 20 . . . . . Pray ye that your flight.  
 Matt. xxvi. 26, 27 . . . . . Took bread, and blessed.  
 Matt. xxvi. 36-44 . . . . . Sit ye here, while I go yonder.  
 Matt. xxvi. 41 . . . . . Watch and pray.  
 Matt. xxvi. 53 . . . . . Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray.  
 Matt. xxvii. 46 . . . . . Jesus cried with a loud voice.  
 Mark i. 35 . . . . . And in the morning, a great while.

- Mark i. 40 . . . . A leper, beseeching him.  
 Mark v. 10 . . . . He besought him much that he would not.  
 Mark v. 17 . . . . To beseech him to depart.  
 Mark v. 18 . . . . Besought him that he might be with him.  
 Mark v. 23 . . . . My little daughter is at the point of death.  
 Mark vi. 41 . . . . He blessed, and brake.  
 Mark vi. 46 . . . . He departed into the mountain.  
 Mark vii. 26 . . Besought him that he would cast forth.  
 Mark vii. 32 . . Beseech him to lay his hand upon him.  
 Mark viii. 6, 7 . . Having given thanks, he brake.  
 Mark viii. 22 . . Beseech him to touch him.  
 Mark ix. 17-27 . . I brought unto thee my son.  
 Mark ix. 28, 29 . . We could not cast it out.  
 Mark x. 16 . . . . Blessed them, laying his hands upon them.  
 Mark x. 35-40 . . Master, we would that thou shouldest do.  
 Mark x. 46-52 . . Jesus . . . have mercy on me.  
 Mark xi. 17 . . . . My house shall be called.  
 Mark xi. 22-24 . . Have faith in God.  
 Mark xi. 25 . . . . Whosoever ye stand praying.  
 Mark xii. 40 . . . . For a pretence make long prayers.  
 Mark xiii. 18 . . . . Pray ye that it be not in the winter.  
 Mark xiii. 33 . . . . Take ye heed, watch and pray.  
 Mark xiv. 22, 23 . . When he had blessed, he brake.  
 Mark xiv. 32-41 . . Sit ye here, while I pray.  
 Mark xiv. 37, 38 . . Watch and pray.  
 Mark xv. 34 . . . . Jesus cried with a loud voice.  
 Luke iii. 21 . . . . Jesus also having been baptised, and  
 Luke iv. 8 . . . . Thou shalt worship the Lord. [praying.  
 Luke iv. 38, 39 . . They besought him for her.  
 Luke v. 8 . . . . Depart from me.  
 Luke v. 12, 13 . . If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.  
 Luke v. 16 . . . . He withdrew himself in the deserts. .  
 Luke v. 18 . . . . Men bring on a bed.  
 Luke vi. 12 . . . . He went out into the mountain.  
 Luke vi. 28 . . . . Pray for them that despitefully use you.  
 Luke vii. 3 . . . . Asking him that he would come.  
 Luke viii. 24 . . Master, Master, we perish.  
 Luke viii. 31 . . They intreated him that he would not.  
 Luke viii. 37 . . Asked him to depart from them.  
 Luke viii. 38 . . Prayed him that he might be with him.  
 Luke viii. 41 . . A man named Jairus.  
 Luke ix. 16 . . . . He blessed them, and brake.  
 Luke ix. 18 . . . . As he was praying alone.  
 Luke ix. 28, 29 . . And went up into the mountain.  
 Luke ix. 38 . . . . Master, I beseech thee.

Luke ix. 59.... Suffer me first to go.  
 Luke ix. 61.... First suffer me to bid farewell.  
 Luke x. 2 ..... Pray ye therefore.  
 Luke x. 21 ..... I thank thee, O Father.  
 Luke x. 40 .... Bid her therefore that she help me.  
 Luke xi. 1-4 .... As he was praying in a certain place.  
 Luke xi. 5-13.... Which of you shall have a friend.  
 Luke xiii. 25-27.. Lord, open to us.  
 Luke xiv. 15-24.. A certain man made a great supper.  
 Luke xv. 21 22.. Father, I have sinned.  
 Luke xvii 13.. Jesus, Master, have mercy.  
 Luke xviii. 1-8 .. To the end that they ought always to pray.  
 Luke xviii. 9-14.. Two men went up into the temple.  
 Luke xviii. 38 .. Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy.  
 Luke xix. 46 .... My house shall be.  
 Luke xx. 47 .... For a pretence make long prayers.  
 Luke xxi. 36 .... Making supplication that ye may prevail.  
 Luke xxii. 17-19.. When he had given thanks.  
 Luke xxii. 32.... I made supplication for thee.  
 Luke xxii. 40.... Pray that ye enter not into temptation.  
 Luke xxii. 41.... He kneeled down and prayed.  
 Luke xxii. 46.... Rise and pray.  
 Luke xxiii. 34 .. Father, forgive them.  
 Luke xxiii 42,43 .. Jesus, remember me.  
 Luke xxiii. 46 .. Father, into thy hands.  
 Luke xxiv. 30 .. Blessed it, and brake.  
 Luke xxiv. 50 .. Lifted up his hands, and blessed them.  
 John iv. 10..... If thou knewest the gift of God.  
 John iv. 20-25 .. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.  
 John iv. 40.... They besought him to abide.  
 John iv. 47.... Besought him that he would come.  
 John vi. 11..... And having given thanks.  
 John vi. 15..... Perceiving that they were about to come.  
 John ix. 31..... We know that God heareth not sinners.  
 John xi. 41, 42 .. Father, I thank thee.  
 John xii. 27. 28 .. Father, save me from this hour.  
 John xiii. 9.... Lord, not my feet only.  
 John xiv. 8.... Lord, shew us the Father.  
 John xiv. 13, 14.. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name.  
 John xiv. 16 .... I will pray the Father.  
 John xv. 7 ..... If ye abide in me.  
 John xv. 16 .... Whatsoever ye shall ask.  
 John xvii. 3. 24 .. If ye shall ask anything.  
 John xvi. 26 .... In that day ye shall ask.  
 John xvii. 1-26 .. These things spake Jesus.