

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Jesus the Master Teacher



SESSION 9

How Do You Teach?
Covered and Surrounded by Prayer

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How Do You Teach? Covered and Surrounded by Prayer

SESSION OVERVIEW

How Can You Teach Covered and Surrounded by Prayer?

How Do You Acknowledge Prayer Requests and Answers?

How Did Jesus Cover and Surround His Teaching with Prayer? An Example

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should be able to:

- Focus on the importance of prayer. Reflect on your prayer life and how it affects your teaching, before, during, and after the sessions.
- Plan how you will communicate and acknowledge class prayer requests and answers for class members.
- Analyze the prayers of Jesus for His disciples and relate His prayers to the prayers in your Bible studies.

How Do You Teach? Covered and Surrounded by Prayer

INTRODUCTION

JOURNALING

The next six lessons involve some familiar teaching techniques and strategies that may work for you as a Bible teacher of adults and could be used in any class, regardless of content. In this lesson, however, you will be thinking about the most important strategy for facilitating adult Bible studies and prayer. Without prayer, a Bible study is just words, rather than the WORD of God. As you journal about this session, think about your prayer life and how your prayers have been answered in ways that you never dreamed. Reflect on those prayers that were seemingly never answered, the prayers where God told you to wait, or the prayers that never seemed to get through. Record your thoughts in your journal to remind you of the importance of prayer in your own life.

FORD AND ITP

The phone call was one of those that you never want to hear. My daughter called to tell me that my 4-year-old grandson, Ford, woke up with bruises covering his body and they were taking him to the doctor to see what could possibly be wrong. Immediately, I thought of leukemia and although I tried to be encouraging, my voice was shaky as I said I would begin praying. Within a few hours, I received another phone call to tell me that Ford was being ambulated to DeVos Children's Hospital, about 40 miles away from their home. I continued to pray, as did our wonderful church family. Throughout the afternoon and late into the evening, Ford's blood was tested over and over again. They decided to test his blood marrow to rule out leukemia. Our prayers increased and we prayed specifically "Not leukemia!" After a blood marrow test for diagnosis, our prayer was answered as we requested. It was "not leukemia!" Instead, his condition was labeled as ITP or Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura. To this day, I remember my relief that indeed it was not leukemia. (As a teacher, I had had several young students die of leukemia while they were in my school. I knew what could happen, and it just couldn't happen to my oldest grandson! Surely God would know that!) So I quickly prayed my praise to God and informed my church family of the wonderful answer.

Unfortunately, our time with the disease was not over with the new diagnosis. ITP is an autoimmune bleeding disorder characterized by abnormally low levels of blood cells called platelets. It is caused by antibodies in the blood that attack the platelets. Ford's ITP was originally labeled as acute, a condition that normally stops spontaneously after three to six months. In Ford's case, however, it took two and a half years. He experienced an illness that involved frequent blood draws, medicine typically prescribed for leprosy patients, 10 chemo treatments, many doctor's appointments, and bouts of anemia. He was very weak and several times had to be physically carried home from school or ride in a stroller designed for a toddler. I confess that my prayers during this two-and-a-half-year period became more questioning and complaining and seldom included meaningful prayers of praise. I especially remember when I sat with Ford for one of his chemo treatments and I admired his childlike faith and smile. I responded with a smile, but inside I was furious at God! How could He let this happen to this young boy? I continued praying for healing, complaining and questioning quietly, and sometimes reminding God of His healing power. Now, at age 9, Ford is healed from ITP, his condition is labeled as chronic. There is only a small chance of the disease appearing again. Praise God, the Great Healer!

I will never forget when Ford visited us in Houston after he was healed. I asked him to speak to my adult Bible study class and tell them how God had healed him. In his 6-year-old voice, Ford described his disease in detail and the fact that he knew God had healed him. Tears were flowing, smiles were abundant, and God was praised as we all offered prayers of thanksgiving for the healing of this child.

Why did I tell you a story about prayer and healing in this first chapter on teaching strategies? I truly believe that to be an effective Bible study teacher, the MOST important strategy is prayer. Simply put, without prayer, a Bible study is just words or ideas stated by any teacher, rather than the WORD of God. Even the best human teacher in the world cannot teach the WORD of God effectively without being covered and surrounded by prayer. Let's see what prayer practically looks like before, during, and after a Bible study.

HOW CAN YOU TEACH COVERED AND SURROUNDED BY PRAYER?



NOTES

I began this session with a story that talked about my prayers: the prayers for healing, the prayers that were specific, the prayers that were complaining, the prayers that were questioning, and the prayers that were sometimes filled with just a little praise. I assume, perhaps incorrectly, that all of us have whispered, stated, or even shouted those types of prayers in response to serious events in our lives. I confess that my prayer life has not always been consistent, holy, or unceasing. As you read my suggestions for prayer in this lesson, know that these are ideas that I have used some or most of the time but never all the time. For example, when I suggest that you begin studying and praying about the lesson you will teach, I state that you should begin early so that God can reveal what you should do or say that week. Generally, I begin praying about the lesson on Monday, so God can help me relate events of the week to His Word, but not always. Also, please note that I have described the prayers for the Bible study teacher as those that “cover” and “surround.” Those words are intentional. A covering is inclusive; it doesn’t leave anything or anyone out. Our prayers are to “cover” our students as well as our preparation, our study time, our interactions with both students and the WORD, and our reflections after the lesson is finished. Surround is a verb that means “to enclose something” or to “be around somebody.” Our prayers are to enclose both the student and teacher so that they focus on God and His Word AND to be around us completely as we live out our Christian lives. Here are some suggestions that hopefully encourage you to be “covered and surrounded by prayer.”

Prayer BEFORE the Bible study: As we have discussed in previous sessions, to effectively teach, you must make connections between the content and the learner. The best way to make these connections is to prepare the lesson WITH prayer. First, I identify the main idea of the lesson. If you are using specific curriculum, the writers will probably include a purpose statement, give a scripture reference that is to be memorized, or highlight a sentence or idea. I then pray specifically that God will help me see how the main idea relates to my students and/or to me. I have found that when I pray this type of prayer, I discover the most amazing illustrations, or I see situations that directly connect to the study of the week, or I experience an event that causes me to want to delve into the lesson in a deeper way. For example, in a recent study, the Bible lesson was about the compromising church in Pergamos (Revelation 2:13) where the angel of the church said, “I know your works, and WHERE YOU DWELL.” As someone who had recently moved from a situation where I had seen God’s blessings to a new home with an uncertain future, I could immediately connect the idea that “God knows where I live!” to fellow Christians. It made a difference to me and to the others in the class as I shared my excitement about God’s providence.

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Second, I pray before I study the lesson and ask God to clarify the ideas within the scripture. I ask God to open my eyes, clear my mind, identify resources, and help me know when to ask for other's help. I believe that God wants us to understand His Word and how it applies to us ("For God is not the author of confusion . . ." 1 Corinthians 14:33), and I pray that He will help me deliver the words that will help others understand as well. Because I have been in the church since childhood, I have often read the same scripture many times. This is especially true during the Easter or Christmas seasons. I pray that I will never be bored or not amazed by the resurrection or incarnation. I also pray that God will help me have a new vision of the story, a unique application of His Word, or a new connection that is just the right one for someone in my class.

Finally, I pray that God will help me identify someone who has taught me a spiritual lesson or someone who could teach the Bible study group as a whole for a few minutes or an entire lesson or even a series of lessons. Over the years, God has often placed the name of a person on my heart who has experienced a specific answer to prayer or who has particular knowledge about a portion of scripture or even someone who has been involved in a service project that connects directly to the lesson. Most often, the pastor's sermon on the Sunday before our Bible study has special relevance to our scripture, and prayer reminds me of the connection. (In fact, students often say, "Isn't it neat that the pastor seems to know just what we will be studying every week!") Our Bible study group has been blessed by the knowledge and experiences of others, and prayer is a powerful connector to those people.

Prayer DURING the Bible study: Normally?, we pray aloud and ask God's presence as we study the lesson. However, it needs to be more than just a cursory "thing we do." To emphasize the importance of prayer, I vary our approach. Immediately before the lesson, I ask someone to lead in prayer asking God's guidance. Sometimes, I pray publicly asking God to speak through me or those who share. Other times, I ask for volunteers to pray for specific needs or to reiterate praises for answered prayers and then I close with a prayer that connects directly to the lesson. At times, I stop the lesson midway and pray for guidance or forgiveness or with someone who asks for prayer. Immediately after the lesson, I lead the group in a reflective activity where I encourage silent prayer about the specific lesson topics and actions that were emphasized. We always close with a prayer of thanksgiving for His presence. As a teacher, I am always thankful for the words found in Psalms 139:1-6, "You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down. And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether . . ." I pray that the words of my tongue during the study will be pleasing to Him!

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Prayer AFTER the Bible study: I am a reflective teacher. That simply means that I always review what I teach and how my students and I respond. Because I am most critical of myself, I could be easily defeated about what I said, what I didn't say, or how I responded to a particular student. My father was a minister and evangelist. He often said that he always prayed that those who heard him would make a decision about something important to God. I pray a similar prayer after the Bible study. I pray that God will continue to speak to those in the class with His words, not mine. I pray that God will meet the needs of those who shared or didn't share them in class. I praise Him for being in our session. And I ask Him to remind me that I am only in charge of obeying and that He is in charge of the results. Praise God!

HOW DO YOU ACKNOWLEDGE PRAYER REQUESTS AND ANSWERS?



NOTES

In early childhood classes, 10 minutes are often set aside in the morning for the news. This typically involves events that are important to students, such as new pets, places traveled, family members, or an exciting news event. In the case of Bible study groups, “morning news” or a time to share prayers is also important.

As we have discussed, adult students enter a Bible study with a variety of joys, hurts, and needs. They crave a group that can listen and share these joys, hurts, and needs. It is important that prayer requests and their answers be acknowledged within the group and that as followers together, we share prayers and commit to praying for each other. The problem is . . . how do we acknowledge prayer requests and answers appropriately and efficiently without being too specific, without invading anyone’s privacy, or without taking time from a study of God’s Word?

When do you acknowledge prayer requests and answers? This question has many answers and they all involve the word “sometimes.” Sometimes you review requests and answers at the beginning of the session. Other times, it is more appropriate to talk about the praises for answered prayers at the beginning of the lesson and save the group’s requests before the closing. Sometimes, there is just a general prayer for all requests and answers with the specific prayers shared in print form and sent out later in an email, phone text, snail mail, or on Facebook. The important issue is that the prayer requests and answers along with the praises are acknowledged and shared. In addition, it is important that students understand the difference between sharing a request with the group that would go out to everyone and sharing a request with just one Christian friend. I often emphasized that we did not need to know all the details of a request; we just needed to know that someone needed prayer for a situation, an illness, a loss, a family, or a spiritual issue. We often had unspoken prayer requests or answers that I stressed were more important than those we could share. Finally, sometimes there is a student in our group who has a critical need or an answered prayer that requires group prayer whenever it occurs. I remember with great joy when we surrounded a class member with our praise prayers for his salvation and baptism. We had been praying for him for many years and our “tongues could not be silent.” In contrast, I remember when God ministered to all of our hearts when Philip returned to class after many chemo treatments and a poor prognosis. Again, we surrounded him with our prayers as we prayed that God would be glorified in all ways according to His will, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done!”

NOTES

What is a prayer request? Many of the verbal prayer requests in our Bible study group of older class members have involved physical or emotional illnesses. I admit that I focused much of my prayer requests for Ford and his parents on his physical condition for the two years of his disease. It was easy to enlist everyone's prayers for him because we knew God as the great healer and we cared about a young innocent child and a disease that was not his fault. It is a good thing that our Bible study group genuinely cared about each other and our physical ailments. It is also a good thing that many people who were not involved in our group requested to be on our prayer lists for physical concerns. With that said, I think it is important to request prayer for spiritual concerns for class members, family members, friends, your specific church and leaders, the unchurched, missionaries, and the nation's leaders. It is also important that we request prayer for our enemies or those who have "spitefully" used us (Matthew 5:44). While some of these prayers cannot or should not be specifically described (i.e., unspoken requests), they are important to God and to us. I believe spiritual concerns should be the primary requests during our prayer times.

It is also important that we take prayer requests seriously. It is not enough to communicate a need or a concern and ask others to pray with you on a particular need. All of us must pray for each other. In fact, that is one of the roles of a teacher, to pray for your students and their needs and to encourage others to pray for those requests. I still remember a cruise around Italy that my husband and I took a few years ago. Because the weather was not ideal, we decided to walk around the enclosed upper deck for our exercise time each day. We decided that we would pray together for the individual members in our Bible study as we walked. We prayed for all of their needs, praised God for the many answers to prayer that we had experienced through their lives, and for His continued blessings. It was a joyful time as we concentrated together on our prayers for others (AND it had an additional physical benefit as our prayers became longer each day!)

What are answers to prayer? I have often cautioned class members against viewing answers to prayer as God doing what we want or on God's clear or immediate answers. The longer I live, the better I understand that God sometimes answers my prayers with new visions or experiences that simply don't make sense to me always. Sometimes God's answers to our prayers are not the easy answers; instead, they result in a difficult situation that causes heartache for those we love. Sometimes, God's answers are simply "no" when we pray for a specific job, a good financial situation, or a marriage partner. Other times, the answer is "wait" because God has something better or different than our anticipated expectations.

 **NOTES**

Some of the most difficult questions that I have been asked as an adult teacher are the “why” questions. Why didn’t God heal my husband who has been a dedicated follower of God for years? Didn’t my prayers work? Why aren’t my kids who were raised in church following God? Was something wrong with my prayers? Why did God lead me to this job when nothing seems to go right? Did I not understand His answers? Why hasn’t God answered my prayer about a Christian mate? Didn’t he hear my request? Why do the people I pray for treat me so poorly? Should I quit praying for them? Why don’t my friends believe in God? Have I not prayed for them enough? Why? Why? Why? I myself have often asked the why questions, and God continues to remind me that I am His child and I will not always understand His answers. To answer the why questions for myself and others, I often share the following quote by Oswald Chambers from his devotional book, *My Utmost for His Highest*, “God places His saints where they will bring the most glory to Him, and we are totally incapable of judging where that may be” (p 223. Discovery House: Grand Rapids, 1935). I want to be where He places me!

HOW DID JESUS COVER AND SURROUND HIS TEACHING WITH PRAYER? AN EXAMPLE

NOTES

The Scriptures records hundreds of verses where Jesus either prayed or talked about prayer in the Gospels or elsewhere in the Scripture as intercessory prayers for us. In many of those examples, He prayed before, during, or after He taught; in fact, He seemed to always “cover and surround His teaching with prayer.” While there are many such examples, let’s look at Luke’s record of Jesus teaching His disciples.

“Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’ So He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one’ (Luke 11:1-4).

Indeed, the words of the “Lord’s Prayer” are powerful and have been described, referenced, reviewed, and detailed in many sources for purposes different than this lesson. Instead, let’s look at it from a teacher’s perspective. Luke places this scripture at the beginning of the bulk of Jesus’ teachings about prayer, treasures, the kingdom of God, concerns for others, and the authority of God (to name just a few of His teachings).

Let’s notice the beginning of the passage, “Now it came to pass, AS HE WAS PRAYING IN A CERTAIN PLACE, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, TEACH US TO BE PRAYING (a literal translation of the request).” I note two interesting ideas from this passage. First, Jesus was praying in a CERTAIN place. The phrase implies that Jesus did this often, in a place that was known for prayer. Second, note that the disciple did not ask how to pray. He only said, “Teach us to be praying (implied “like you!”). What a model for His disciples! He did not need to exhort His disciples to pray; rather, they wanted to be taught “to be praying” like Him. Oh, that our lives as teachers could be so covered and surrounded with prayer that others we teach would want “to be praying” like us!

NOTES**CLOSING THOUGHT**

This session has talked about prayer that you as a teacher should pray or facilitate in your life group. I believe that both Bible study and prayer are essential tools to teaching the Word of God. Think about doing a study on prayer that is described in II Chronicles when Solomon dedicates the temple and God comes in his mighty power to His people. In chapter 7, verse 14, God states, “. . . IF My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” I wonder what would happen within my Bible study group if we (and I as the teacher) really did this!

APPLICATION



NOTES

Be prepared to share your three application activities with your mentor.

1. Think about how you pray for your students before, during, and after the sessions. Describe your current practices and record some future goals for your prayer life.
2. Reflect on the role of prayer requests and prayer answers in your Bible study group. How will you acknowledge and communicate students' prayer requests and the reports of answers to prayer?
3. Select a portion of scripture that records when Jesus prayed. Analyze what happened immediately after His prayer. What was He teaching? Who was He teaching? How was He teaching? Relate your findings to your own teaching situation.

JOURNALING

Consider some of the following when journaling:

- One idea, Bible verse, or story that made an impression on me today was . . .
- A new idea I encountered today is . . .
- One thing that made me uncomfortable today was . . .
- The prayer I most want to pray right now is . . .

EXAM

**NOTES**

1. To prayer a prayer that will “cover” is to include _____.
 - A. praying for our preparation to teach
 - B. praying for our students
 - C. praying for the time of discussion and reflection
 - D. all of the above
2. The author suggests that one focused way to pray is to center our prayer on the main, biblical idea or purpose of the upcoming lesson.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. Some specific things you might pray for include which of the following?
 - A. For God’s help to understand the Scripture passage.
 - B. For wisdom to know when I need to ask someone else for help.
 - C. For the students to not ask tough questions about the Scripture passage.
 - D. a and b
4. When we take Bible study seriously, we will make it a habit to pray as a group before we begin.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. Like Jesus did with the disciples, one of the best ways to teach others how to pray is to model a habit of prayer in our life.
 - A. True
 - B. False

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT



NOTES

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor:

1. Give a copy of your responses to the first and third application activities to your mentor before you meet.
2. Share your ideas for the second application activity with your mentor and discuss your answer.
3. Talk about your prayer life and how it can help the students in your group “to be praying” as described in Luke 11:1-4.