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EQUIPPING THE LEADERS OF SKREFSRUD LUTHERAN  
CHURCH OF BERESFORD, SOUTH DAKOTA, TO  
LEAD PRAYER MEETINGS BASED ON THE  
LORD'S PRAYER AND THE PSALMS

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Presented to  
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by  
Jarrod Jennings Hylden  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

EQUIPPING THE LEADERS OF SKREFSRUD LUTHERAN  
CHURCH OF BERESFORD, SOUTH DAKOTA, TO  
LEAD PRAYER MEETINGS BASED ON THE  
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For the saints of Skrefsrud Lutheran Church

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Bar	Baruch
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000 (Danker-Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich)
BHGNT	Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament
Did.	Didache
LXX	Septuagint
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963-1976

## PREFACE

I thank my wife, Elise, for her unwavering love and support during my doctoral studies at SBTS. I thank my mother for always praying for her three boys to know and serve the Lord. I thank the people of Skrefsrud Lutheran Church for giving me time to complete this project. I thank my supervisor, William F. Cook III, for his kindness and encouragement throughout my writing. Finally, I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord (1 Tim 1:12).

Jarrold Hylden

Beresford, South Dakota

December 2022

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Although many congregations desire to have more intentional times of corporate prayer, they often lack the guidance to do this effectively. This project has sought to equip the deacons and other leaders of Skrefsrud Lutheran Church (SLC) of Beresford, South Dakota, to lead prayer meetings. They were specifically trained to lead prayer meetings based upon the petitions of the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms.

#### **Context**

SLC is a rural congregation in southeast South Dakota. SLC has an average attendance of fifty-five people and only one staff member, the pastor. The deacons are elected to three-year terms by the congregation to assist the pastor with the spiritual care of the congregation. However, in recent years they have not engaged in much spiritual care at all. In fact, the only responsibility the deacons performed consistently was to prepare the elements for communion once a month. This has been the case since before I came to SLC in 2015 and, regrettably, I did little to change this situation in my first several years of ministry. The deacons and I usually met about once every three or four months for devotions, prayer, and to discuss ministry. However, I did not equip them for the work of ministry. I did invite them to pray for the members of our congregation on a regular basis. They took up this task with faithfulness and were eager to serve SLC through prayer.

As I was preparing a proposal for this project, I noticed several problems at SLC that needed to be addressed. Several of them needed to be addressed chiefly, though not only, through prayer. One such problem was a lack of unity between the older

members and the younger members. Many of the younger adults have come in the past two to seven years, whereas most of the older adults have been coming for decades. There was not much interaction between the two groups and at times there has been a lack of cooperation. Another problem I noticed was the spiritual immaturity of many members, evidenced by a lack of regular attendance at worship, no attendance at Bible study, and an apparent lack of personal Bible reading. What is more, it was not uncommon for spiritually immature members to be elected to serve on the congregation's leadership council. In recent years, immature leaders serving on the council made it impossible for SLC to pursue biblical avenues related to church membership and discipline.

Another disheartening problem was a lack of evangelism and concern for the lost among the members of SLC. The growth we have experienced has mainly been due to new babies being born, not from visitors or unchurched people coming to Christ. As pastor, I have invited a handful of people to come to SLC who have ended up becoming members. Sadly, during my first five years as pastor, I only knew of one family that came to church because they were invited by another member. More recently, several new families have come to SLC. Nonetheless, the apparent lack of evangelistic efforts at SLC has been discouraging. There were other problems as well that need not be mentioned here.

Prayer ought to be the starting point for addressing these concerns. However, SLC was not in the practice of praying together outside of Sunday morning worship. Members of SLC did gather early to pray together before one important council meeting, but this was our only prayer meeting in recent history. Those who gathered felt it was very meaningful and expressed their desire to have more regular prayer meetings. Several of our members, including the deacons, came to the conviction that all our problems, big and small, should be addressed through prayer. We came to this conviction because of

our great need and because our heavenly Father promises to hear our prayers addressed to him in the name of Jesus.

### **Rationale**

The first weakness this project sought to address was the limited ministry of the deacons at SLC. Although the Lord has called pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:12), the deacons at SLC had not been equipped, or even called upon, to minister. The deacons should be equipped to minister in various ways, but this project focused on equipping them to become prayer leaders in our congregation. Since SLC currently has only two deacons, I chose to include three other leaders of our congregation to be trained to lead prayer meetings.

The other weakness, as I alluded to in the context section above, was the general lack of spiritual health and maturity at SLC. As mentioned, SLC had various problems (e.g., lack of unity, lack of evangelism, and immature leaders) that needed to be addressed. For these corporate sins and weaknesses, corporate prayer needed to be part of the solution. Prior to the implementation of this project, SLC had only met one time in recent history for the sole purpose of corporate prayer.

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul urged, as a matter of prime importance, that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people” (1 Tim 2:1).<sup>1</sup> Under the pastoral leadership of Timothy, the congregation at Ephesus was instructed to engage in regular, corporate prayer for the benefit of all people. In another letter, Paul instructed the Ephesians that pastors and teachers have been given “to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). Motivated partly by these two passages, this project sought to equip the leaders of SLC for the work of ministry by teaching them how to lead prayer meetings. As mentioned

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version (ESV).

earlier, SLC had its share of problems, including a lack of evangelism, a lack of unity, and some immature leadership. Now that five of the leaders have been equipped to lead prayer meetings, I pray the people of SLC will grow in their desire to see all people saved (1 Tim 2:4; thus, addressing the lack of evangelism). Further, by equipping the leaders for the work of ministry, this project may become an important means through which God brings about a greater “unity of faith” at SLC, with its members growing into “mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13; thus, addressing the lack of unity). Finally, after being equipped to lead prayer meetings, at least five of the leaders have grown in their spiritual maturity. By God’s grace, this project has sought to strengthen the spiritual life of the entire congregation.

There are many good resources available to teach people how to pray together or to lead prayer meetings. The curriculum provided in this project is unique in that it looks specifically to the Lord’s Prayer and to the Psalms as the basis and guide for praying together.<sup>2</sup> When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he gave them a prayer, the first word of which (“our”) assumes it will be prayed corporately. In addition, for millennia God’s people have used the Psalms as *the* essential resource for both prayer and worship. Why not look to these biblical and ancient prayers to guide our corporate prayer today? Therefore, the leaders of SLC have now been equipped to lead prayer meetings based on the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer and the Psalms. This leads to a clear re-statement of this project’s purpose.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to strengthen the spiritual life of Skrefsrud Lutheran Church in Beresford, South Dakota, by equipping its spiritual leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord’s Prayer and the Psalms.

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix 4.

## **Goals**

In order to accomplish our purpose, this project sought to accomplish the following three steps or goals.

1. The first goal was to assess the spiritual leaders' current understanding and practice of prayer.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-lesson curriculum designed to equip the leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. The curriculum included instruction and examples of using the petitions of the Lord's Prayer and verses from the Psalms as the basis and guide for praying together.
3. The third goal was to implement the curriculum and equip the leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms.

A specific research methodology has been created that will measure the successful completion of these three goals.<sup>3</sup> This methodology is described in the following section.

## **Research Methodology**

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of these three goals. The first goal was to assess the spiritual leaders' current understanding and practice of prayer. This goal was measured by administering the Understanding and Practice of Prayer Survey (UPPS) to the five leaders selected.<sup>4</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when the leaders completed the UPPS and the results were analyzed in order to gain a clearer picture of their understanding and practice of prayer.

The second goal was to develop a six-lesson curriculum designed to equip the leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. The curriculum has two parts, one on the Lord's Prayer and the other on the Psalms. The participants are first taught how to use the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms as a basis or

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<sup>3</sup> All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1.

guide for prayer in their own lives. Then they are taught how to lead prayer meetings based upon these ancient, biblical prayers. Two templates are provided to give examples of how leaders may organize, structure, and lead prayer meetings. This goal was measured by an expert panel consisting of one professor from the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary, one Free Lutheran pastor who serves as the South Dakota district president of our denomination, a local pastor who serves an Evangelical Free congregation, and an educator with over twenty years of experience teaching in youth ministry and public education settings. The panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the curriculum to measure its biblical faithfulness, scope, pedagogy, and practicality for use in the congregation.<sup>5</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the initial feedback yielded less than 90 percent, the curriculum was revised and returned to the panel for evaluation until it met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to implement the curriculum and equip the leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. I taught the curriculum to the leaders over the course of six weeks. This goal was measured in part by administering the UPPS to the deacons again after they completed the curriculum. Additionally, each of the leaders demonstrated, through role play, his or her ability to lead a prayer meeting based upon the Lord's Prayer or the Psalms. The course instructor evaluated their competency to lead by using an evaluation rubric.<sup>6</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a comparison of the UPPS responses demonstrated a positive change in the leaders' understanding and practice of prayer. In addition, this goal was considered successfully met when each leader scored at the sufficient level or above on the evaluation rubric.

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>6</sup> See appendix 3.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following definition of a key term will be used in the ministry project:

*Deacons.* According to the Constitution and By-laws of Skrefsrud Lutheran Church, “The deacons shall be persons known for their Christian life and character, being patterns of the flock and setting a good example in their manner of life. They shall assist the Pastor in the spiritual care of the congregation. One or more deacons shall be elected each year at the annual meeting for a term of three years each.” The deacons serve on the leadership council of SLC and, with the pastor, serve as spiritual leaders of the congregation. I initially planned to teach the curriculum to the deacons only. However, when the time came to implement the curriculum, SLC had only two deacons. Therefore, I thought it would be good to select three other leaders of SLC in order to train them also. I selected the chairman of our congregation as well as the two wives of the two deacons. One of these women is a former deacon herself, the other woman serves as the superintendent of the Sunday school. Thus, five leaders of SLC were equipped to lead prayer meetings.

There was only one limitation that applied to this project. It had to do with the leaders’ willingness to attend and fully participate in the six-lesson training curriculum designed to equip them to lead prayer meetings. To mitigate this limitation, I scheduled the training sessions so that each of the five leaders were able to attend. I also limited the duration of each session to one hour so that it would not use up too much of their time.

One delimitation was placed upon this project. The curriculum was meant to be accomplished in six, one-hour sessions. The purpose of this delimitation was to provide enough time to teach and equip the leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord’s Prayer and the Psalms. Although more lessons could have been added to equip them more thoroughly, six was sufficient to teach what was necessary without becoming an undue burden on the leaders’ valuable time.

## **Conclusion**

This introduction has briefly described the foundational elements of this project, which aims to strengthen the spiritual life of SLC by equipping its leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. Chapter 2 will provide biblical exegesis as a basis for why Christians ought to pray together. Chapter 3 will explore how the church has prayed together in the past and will evaluate various methods of praying corporately before making a case for the great benefits of corporate prayer based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. Chapter 4 will describe the implementation of this project and summarize the curriculum designed to equip the leaders. Chapter 5 will give a concluding evaluation of this project.

CHAPTER 2  
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS  
FOR CORPORATE PRAYER IN  
THE CONGREGATION

This chapter aims to show that there is biblical support for the purpose of this project, namely, to equip the leaders of SLC to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. The thesis of this chapter is that God's people must be taught how to pray, they must be encouraged to pray, and they must come together to pray corporately for the physical and spiritual needs of those outside and within the congregation. To support this thesis, I will examine Scripture passages from Luke 11, 1 Timothy 2, and James 5.

**Jesus Teaches and Encourages His  
Disciples to Pray (Luke 11:1-13)**

Disciples of Christ must be taught how to pray. Exegesis of Luke 11:1-4 will support the thesis of this chapter by demonstrating that Jesus taught his disciples to pray by giving them a model prayer. Furthermore, disciples must be encouraged to pray. Exegesis of Luke 11:5-13 will support the thesis by demonstrating that Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray by using a variety of rhetorical methods.

**The Topic of Prayer throughout  
Luke's Corpus**

I will begin shortly with an exposition of Luke 11:1-13, where Jesus first gives a model prayer to his disciples and then encourages them to pray. Before giving the exposition of this passage, however, it is worthwhile to notice Luke's emphasis on prayer

throughout his Gospel and the book of Acts.<sup>1</sup> Luke 5:16 describes Jesus's regular practice, "Yet he often withdrew to deserted places and prayed" (CSB). Darrell L. Bock says that Luke highlights the importance of prayer "by showing how significant events are associated with prayer."<sup>2</sup> Bock then lists the following significant events where Jesus prays in Luke's Gospel: at his baptism (3:21), in association with one of his miracles (5:15-16), before choosing the Twelve apostles (6:12), at his transfiguration (9:29), at the return of the seventy-two (10:17-21), at Gethsemane (22:39-46), and at the cross (23:34, 46).<sup>3</sup> Bock then demonstrates Luke's continued emphasis on prayer in his second volume, Acts. Prayer accompanies the descent of the Spirit (Acts 1:7-14), miracles (3:1), Peter's vision about the mission to the Gentiles (10:9-11), Peter's deliverance from prison (12:5), and Paul and Barnabas's mission to the Gentiles (13:2-3).<sup>4</sup> This list is far from exhaustive, for, in almost every chapter of Acts we find examples of corporate or individual prayer. This is because the believers in the earliest church devoted themselves to prayer (2:42). In his two volumes, Luke shows that the Lord and those who follow him commit themselves to prayer. This example is instructive for the church today.

### **Structure of 11:1-13: Model Prayer and Encouragement to Pray**

Now I can examine perhaps the most foundational text about prayer in all of Luke's corpus, Luke 11:1-13. David E. Garland, commenting on this section, writes,

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<sup>1</sup> Here is a list of all fifty occurrences of a noun or a verb for prayer in Luke's corpus: Luke 1:10, 13; 2:37; 3:21; 5:16, 33; 6:12 (2x), 28; 9:18, 28, 29; 11:1 (2x), 2; 18:1, 10, 11; 19:46; 20:47; 22:40, 41, 44, 45, 46; Acts 1:14, 24; 2:42; 3:1; 6:4, 6; 8:15; 9:11, 40; 10:4, 9, 30, 31; 11:5; 12:5, 12; 13:3; 14:23; 16:13, 16, 25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8.

<sup>2</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 325.

<sup>3</sup> Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 325.

<sup>4</sup> Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 325.

“Luke has joined together three pericopes and an exhortation to create a unit on prayer.”<sup>5</sup> He goes on to describe the basic progression of 11:1-13: “The model prayer is supplemented by two hyperbolic illustrations (11:5-8, 11-13) that argue from the lesser to the greater and surround an exhortation to pray (11:9-10).”<sup>6</sup> I will separate 11:1-13 into two sections: 11:1-4 and 11:5-13. In the first section Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray and in the second he encourages them to pray.

### **Jesus Teaches His Disciples a Model Prayer (11:1-4)**

Luke 11:1 gives the setting and impetus for Jesus to give his disciples a model prayer. It says that Jesus was praying in a certain place. As stated above, this was his regular practice and his disciples were often present as he prayed (5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 10:21-22). A desire to conform to Jesus’s practice may have, in part, motivated the unnamed disciple’s question. The stated reason, however, is given in the request itself: “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” Bock comments, “The disciples want a prayer like the one John the Baptist taught his disciples (5:33 shows a similar concern about the practice of John’s disciples).”<sup>7</sup> Bock, citing F. W. Danker, also mentions that “Judaism contained fixed prayers for its liturgy, such as the *Shemoneh Esreh* [Eighteen Benedictions].”<sup>8</sup> This background suggests that the disciple was requesting not just instructions about how to pray in general, but for a particular prayer.

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<sup>5</sup> David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 456.

<sup>6</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 458.

<sup>7</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 2, 9:51-24:53, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1050.

<sup>8</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1050. Bock cites F. W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke’s Gospel*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

Garland writes, “The unnamed disciple in 11:1 wants Jesus to give them a distinctive prayer that would make them stand out.”<sup>9</sup>

Jesus responds to the request in verse 2 by saying, “When (ὅταν) you pray, say . . . .” Bock remarks, “Jesus endorses the communal and liturgical function of the prayer (the ὅταν [whenever] temporal clause anticipates the prayer's repetition).”<sup>10</sup> Bock recognizes that this prayer ought to be repeated by Jesus’s disciples. However, noting the slightly different wording of the same prayer in Matthew 6, Bock makes this qualification: “that we have two versions of the prayer makes another point: the issue is not the prayer’s exact wording, but its themes.”<sup>11</sup> Garland does not think that “whenever (ὅταν)” implies that this prayer should be repeated verbatim. He writes that “Jesus intends the model prayer to function like a tuning fork by which disciples can measure whether their prayers are in the right pitch. It is to be used as an outline that those who pray it may fill out with their own words.”<sup>12</sup> Garland’s words are instructive but they should not cause Christians to shy away from repeating the very words of the Lord’s Prayer, whether at church or in private. This prayer is meant to be repeated *and* it sketches the main themes that believers should continually pray about in their own words.

The opening address of the prayer is the simple word, “Father” (11:2). Jesus himself addressed God this way earlier in 10:21. Now he encourages his disciples to address God using the same intimate name, implying that they are among those to whom the Son has graciously chosen to reveal the Father (cf. 10:22). Commenting on this simple form of address, “Father,” Marshall writes, “the use of the intimate form was the amazing new thing that Jesus wished to teach his disciples, initiating them into the same

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<sup>9</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 460.

<sup>10</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1050.

<sup>11</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1050-51.

<sup>12</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 460.

close relationship with the Father that he enjoyed.”<sup>13</sup> The simple address makes another point, too, as Matthew makes clear in his Gospel (Matt 6:7-8). The disciples do not have to coax God into listening to them, as pagans attempt to do with their many words, for God their Father is ready and willing to hear the prayers of his children.<sup>14</sup> Alan J. Thompson further notes that this form of address “sets the tone for the following requests (the context of family relationship as well as loving authority and dependence).”<sup>15</sup> Thompson is right, for, in this prayer the disciples look to God for everything they need just as children look to their earthly fathers to take care of them. Thompson also correctly reasons that to call God, “Father,” implies his position of authority over those who pray to him.

The first petition of the prayer is “hallowed be your name.” Garland remarks, “In Hebrew thought, the name is virtually equivalent to the thing itself.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore this is a prayer that God himself would be hallowed or sanctified. In *The Small Catechism*, Luther writes, “It is true that God’s name is holy in itself, but we ask in this prayer that it may also become holy in and among us.”<sup>17</sup> This concurs with the interpretation of I. Howard Marshall, who writes that “God’s name is in effect his reputation among men . . . . [M]en are to speak of him with appropriate reverence and honour [*sic*].”<sup>18</sup> Marshall then cites several Scripture passages to elucidate what it means to sanctify God’s name. I will list his clearest examples here:

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<sup>13</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 456.

<sup>14</sup> See Garland, *Luke*, 461.

<sup>15</sup> Alan J. Thompson, *Luke*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2016), 182.

<sup>16</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 461.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 356.

<sup>18</sup> Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 457.

Isaiah 8:13: “But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.”

Isaiah 29:23: “For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.”

Ezekiel 36:23: “And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.”

These passages demonstrate that to sanctify God’s name means to fear him and stand in awe of him. The opposite is to profane God’s name. In Ezekiel 36, God promises to vindicate the holiness of his great name so that the nations will know that he is the Lord. Therefore, the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer is a request for God to make his great name known among men, so they would come to fear and honor him.

The second petition is “Your kingdom come.” Thompson says, “This is a request for the saving rule of God to be seen in fullness and is also a reminder that the arrival of the inaugurated saving rule of God is subject to the Father’s purposes (see 4:43; cf. Acts 1:7).”<sup>19</sup> In Luke 4:43 Jesus declares, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to those other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” Jesus desires the kingdom of God to come to those other towns through his preaching. The kingdom of God has come through Jesus’s teaching and deeds (cf. Luke 11:20). Though it has not yet come in fullness. Much of the world still lies under the rule of sin and of the devil. In the second petition, then, part of the request is for people to come under God’s rule now through repentance and faith in Jesus’s message. However, it is also a prayer for the kingdom to come in its fullness. In this sense, the second petition is similar to the Aramaic prayer of the earliest Christians, *Marana tha* (“our Lord, come!”; cf. 1 Cor 16:22 and Did. 10:14). Garland writes that the second petition “longs for the reign of the

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<sup>19</sup> Thompson, *Luke*, 182.

evil one to be overthrown.”<sup>20</sup> This will not finally occur until the Last Day. The second petition has a clear “now/not yet” aspect to it that is implicit throughout New Testament eschatology. It is a request both for people to come into God’s kingdom now, through repentance and faith, and also a request for the king to return from heaven, destroy the devil and those aligned with him, and to make all things new.

The first two petitions of the Lord’s Prayer have a different form than the last three. Thompson writes, “Πάτερ is followed by five requests: two 2nd sg. requests (σου, 11:2) and three 1st pl. requests (ἡμῶν . . . ἡμῶν, ἡμῶν . . . ἡμῶν, ἡμῶν, 11:3-4).”<sup>21</sup> There is a conceptual or thematic difference as well. The first two petitions are concerned chiefly with aspects of God, his name and his rule, while the last three are concerned with various needs of the disciples. However, this is not to imply that the disciples do not *need* the fulfillment of the first two petitions, in fact, the primary placement of the first two petitions may be intended to instruct the disciples about their own priorities. Bock makes this point when he writes, “As Jesus’ model prayer begins, God’s greatness and the desire that he manifest himself through his kingdom program set a tone of worship and awe. Having established God’s character and authority, Jesus will turn to requests. Once we reflect on who God is, we can better approach him.”<sup>22</sup>

In 11:3, Jesus continues, “Give us each day our daily bread.” Thompson rightly says that “bread” is synecdoche for “food.”<sup>23</sup> All the commentaries discuss the problem of translating the hapax legomenon, τὸν ἐπιούσιον, along with the phrase τὸ καθ’ ἡμέραν. After considering the options, Bock concludes, “The most likely sense is that each day the disciple is to ask for provision, though the more precise force, whether ‘today’ or ‘for

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<sup>20</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 463.

<sup>21</sup> Thompson, *Luke*, 182.

<sup>22</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1053.

<sup>23</sup> Thompson, *Luke*, 182.

the following day,' is uncertain."<sup>24</sup> Marshall argues that the phrase means something like "the bread necessary for existence," or "the bread we need." He also writes, "This view can be linked with the concept of the manna (which is probably present in the background) of which just the right amount was available for those who gathered it (Ex. 16:18; cf. Pr. 30:8)."<sup>25</sup> If this is the case, then the request for daily bread carries with it a call for faith in God to provide all that is necessary for each day.

Luke 11:4 contains the final two petitions. The first is, "and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us." This request is necessary if the disciples wish to remain at peace with God and with one another. Bock comments, "The petitioner is to ask for forgiveness, not because it is deserved, but because the petitioner is forgiving to others."<sup>26</sup> Bock also cites Luke 6:36-38 to show that this petition reflects Jesus's prior instruction to his disciples: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful . . . . [F]orgive, and you will be forgiven . . . . For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." After teaching the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6, Jesus gives further instruction on this particular petition: "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt 6:14-15). Bock comments further, "The connection between the request and the willingness to forgive shows an inherent recognition that what the disciple asks of God one should be ready to do as well (cf. 6:37)."<sup>27</sup> But does this mean that the disciples' forgiveness of one another is what causes God to forgive them? As Thompson points out, the "γὰρ is causal."<sup>28</sup> Yet, Garland explains, "It does not mean that God's forgiveness of us hinges on our forgiving

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<sup>24</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1054.

<sup>25</sup> Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 460.

<sup>26</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1055.

<sup>27</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1055.

<sup>28</sup> Thompson, *Luke*, 183.

others first. The Lord's prayer is to affect the distinctive way that disciples live and not just the distinctive way they pray. It has an ethical thrust; we ought not to expect to receive from God what we are not prepared to bestow on others."<sup>29</sup> In his commentary on Matthew, Jeffrey A. Gibbs explains that these words are given to disciples who have already received abundant forgiveness as a gift from the Father, and that receiving such forgiveness produces in them the willingness to forgive others. He concludes, "To turn away from the responsibility to forgive is ultimately to turn away from being forgiven."<sup>30</sup>

The final petition of the model prayer in Luke's Gospel (but cf. Matt 6:13) is this: "And lead us not into temptation" (11:4). At face value this seems to be a request that God will never let his disciples be tested, tempted, or tried. Garland takes this interpretation, "Jesus does not teach us to pray for strength to hurdle all difficulties that might arise but to avoid them altogether."<sup>31</sup> However, Marshall interprets the phrase differently, saying that the sense is to "cause us not to succumb to temptation."<sup>32</sup> Thompson agrees, writing that this is "a request for help to avoid sin ("temptation"; a prayer for "spiritual protection" Bock 1055), rather than a request to be spared from trials (*pace* BHGNT 375; Nolland 618-19)."<sup>33</sup> In *The Small Catechism*, Luther interprets the petition in a similar manner, explaining that "we ask in this prayer that God would preserve and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice, and that, although we may be attacked by them, we may finally prevail and gain the victory."<sup>34</sup> Bock finds a

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<sup>29</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 464.

<sup>30</sup> Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1-11:1*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2006), 345.

<sup>31</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 465.

<sup>32</sup> Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 462.

<sup>33</sup> Thompson, *Luke*, 183.

<sup>34</sup> Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 358.

fitting way to connect this final petition with the first one: “Disciples want God to be honored, and they want to honor God.”<sup>35</sup>

This concludes the exposition of the first section of Christ’s teaching on prayer in Luke 11:1-13. Even though this prayer is traditionally called the Lord’s Prayer, some have rightly called it “the disciples’ prayer,” because it is the prayer Jesus gave his disciples to pray.<sup>36</sup> The purpose of examining this text for this project is to show that God’s people must be taught how to pray. Left to ourselves, we would wander aimlessly in our prayers. But Jesus gives his disciples the words and themes to include in their regular prayers to the Father. Bock also makes an important comment regarding the corporate nature of this prayer:

The first-person plural requests show the prayer’s community focus . . . . Religion among disciples is not a personal affair, but one in which they are placed into relationship with one another, interceding for one another. What one member requests, all should request with regard to God’s general spiritual activity for his people.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, every time Christians begin to pray, “*Our* Father,” they should be reminded that this is a corporate prayer in which Jesus’s disciples express their fellowship with God and with one another.

### **Jesus Encourages His Disciples to Pray (11:5-13)**

Christ continues the theme of prayer with a brief parable in Luke 11:5-8. The model prayer taught the disciples what kinds of things they should pray for. Now Jesus uses a parable to motivate and encourage them to pray. Kline R. Snodgrass describes the type of parable found in 11:5-8: “This is an interrogative ‘how much more’ parable. Vv.

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<sup>35</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1056.

<sup>36</sup> See, for instance, Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1064.

<sup>37</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1051.

5-7 is one long question and v. 8 provides an assurance.”<sup>38</sup> Jesus often uses the “how much more” rhetorical strategy, for instance, at the end of this pericope in 11:11-13 and in the parable of the godless judge and the persistent widow (18:1-8). Bock says the point of the parable in 11:5-8 is that “God is approachable and should be approached often and with confidence.”<sup>39</sup> Garland sums up the parable this way, “If a grumpy, sleepy neighbor will answer an urgent request at an inopportune hour, how much more will God answer prayer!”<sup>40</sup> Exposition of this brief parable supports the thesis of this chapter by showing that God’s people must be encouraged to pray.

In order to rightly understand this parable, we need to know certain things about Jesus’s culture. Snodgrass comments, “A foundational assumption is the strong sense of responsibility for hospitality in the ancient world, which was part of the virulent shame and honor system of the ancient world. . . . The host had a responsibility to care for his guest, and the sleeping man had obligations to help his neighbor.”<sup>41</sup> It would be shameful to have a guest arrive and not be able to give him anything to eat. This problem is what leads the man with the unexpected guest to ask his neighbor for bread in the middle of the night. This request essentially shares the burden of hospitality. Now the man in bed with his children is *also* under obligation to help provide food for his friend’s guest. It is a glaring *faux pas* when this man says that he will not get up and give his neighbor some bread. Snodgrass remarks, “The whole point is no one would say such a thing and refuse to get up and give his friend what he needs. Such a refusal is unthinkable.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the answer to Jesus’s rhetorical question in verses 5-7 is

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<sup>38</sup> Kline Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 437.

<sup>39</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1057.

<sup>40</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 458.

<sup>41</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 441.

<sup>42</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 442.

something like this, “None of us has a friend who would say that. Even if we asked him in the middle of the night.”

But now what do we do with verse 8? The two major interpretive problems have to do with the meaning of τὴν ἀναίδειαν and the identification of the antecedents for each of the four pronouns in Greek, especially the third one which is connected with τὴν ἀναίδειαν. It is beyond the scope of this brief exposition to survey the options and to carefully weigh them. Some commentators, like Garland and Thompson, rely on the thorough work of Snodgrass. Among other important contributions to the study of this parable, Snodgrass has done an exhaustive study of τὴν ἀναίδειαν in all the available literature of the time period and has concluded that the word consistently has a negative connotation and “refers to people who have no proper sense of shame and willingly engage in improper conduct . . . . [T]he word expresses an ignorance about or disregard of what is shameful and the absence of any sense of proper behavior.”<sup>43</sup> Thompson agrees, noting that translations like “persistence” (NKJV, NJB, NRSV, NASB, HCSB) miss the mark. Instead, one should translate τὴν ἀναίδειαν as “shamelessness,” and, in Luke 11:8 it should be understood as “the ‘shamelessness’ of the one making the request.”<sup>44</sup>

Regarding the four masculine, third-person pronouns in 11:8, Thompson and Snodgrass agree that the antecedent for each pronoun is the petitioner, not the sleeper.<sup>45</sup> The most significant is the third pronoun, which Thompson and Snodgrass take to refer to the shamelessness of the petitioner who comes asking in the middle of the night.<sup>46</sup> There is even more general agreement among commentators that the parable contrasts God with

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<sup>43</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 443.

<sup>44</sup> Thompson, *Luke*, 184.

<sup>45</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 445; Thompson, *Luke*, 184-85. For a different view, see Garland, *Luke*, 468.

<sup>46</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 444-45.

the sleeper. Snodgrass explains the gist of the parable like this: “If a human will obviously get up in the middle of the night to grant the request even of a rude friend, will not God much more answer your requests?”<sup>47</sup> He concludes, “The parable teaches the certainty of a God who hears prayer and responds.”<sup>48</sup> Bock makes a good application of the parable: “Disciples are to make their requests boldly to God. They have access to God and are to make use of it.”<sup>49</sup>

Jesus gives the parable in 11:5-8 to encourage his disciples to pray. The rest of the pericope has the same purpose although Jesus uses different rhetorical forms. Thompson says that the sayings in 11:9-10 apply the parable Jesus just finished telling.<sup>50</sup> Since God is far more generous than the grumpy and reluctant neighbor in the parable, Jesus’s disciples should be encouraged to “ask . . . seek . . . knock” (11:9). These three imperative verbs (synonyms of “pray”) are each joined with corresponding promises: “It will be given to you . . . . [Y]ou will find . . . . [I]t will be opened to you” (11:9). “It will be given” and “it will be opened” are divine passives, while “you will find” is an active verb. Bock comments, “Two passive verbs indicate that God is the supplier, while one active verb shows the disciples’ active involvement.”<sup>51</sup> This may be the case, however, the active verb, “you will find,” does not preclude God from causing the one seeking to find. Luke may have chosen the active voice because using the passive would have rendered the awkward phrase: “it will be found for you.”

Since 11:10 begins with “For (γὰρ),” it gives the ground for the promises in verse 9.<sup>52</sup> This verse supports what was just said and gives further encouragement to

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<sup>47</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 447.

<sup>48</sup> Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 448.

<sup>49</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1060.

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, *Luke*, 185.

<sup>51</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1061.

<sup>52</sup> Thompson, *Luke*, 185.

pray. The disciples can be sure that if they ask, seek, and knock, they will receive, because this is the case for everyone (παᾶς). Of course, this proverbial saying, like all proverbs, speaks of what is generally true and may allow for exceptions here or there. But Jesus's intent is to encourage his disciples to pray with the assurance that God will hear and answer their prayers (see also the parallel text found in a different setting in Matt 7:7-8).

The final illustration (11:11-13) drives home the same point, that God is ready and willing to answer prayer. However, here the focus is on the gift that the Father gives his children, the Holy Spirit. In this illustration Jesus returns to one of his favorite rhetorical devices, the "how much more" question. In verse 11 he asks, "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent?" The thought of a father giving his child a serpent instead of a fish is ridiculous and humorous. Of course, no father would do such a thing. Verse 12 is similar, "Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?" Again, no father would do such a ridiculous and dangerous thing.

In verse 13 Jesus concludes his argument, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Jesus has used humor, logic, and the everyday experiences of family life to make his point. In the parallel saying in Matthew 7:11, Jesus says that the Father gives "good things" to those who ask him, while in Luke 11:13 Jesus identifies the gift more specifically as the Holy Spirit. Jesus could have said both things at different times or Luke may be drawing attention to the specific good gift of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to give to his disciples on various occasions (cf. Luke 24:49; John 14-16).<sup>53</sup> Though the Holy Spirit is given to believers at their conversion, it is still good for them to ask for the Holy Spirit throughout their lives. This is suggested

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<sup>53</sup> Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1063.

by Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 5:18, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." Believers may be more or less filled with the Spirit just as they may be more or less inebriated with wine. In Luke 11:13, the disciples are encouraged by the Son to ask the Father for the Holy Spirit, knowing that He will graciously answer their request. By giving this supreme gift, the Father effectually answers, in part or in full, the petitions of the model prayer in 11:2-4. Thompson writes, "The outworking of the kingdom through Jesus' disciples will be by means of prayer and the empowering work of the Holy Spirit."<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the chief way the Father responds to the disciples' requests in 11:2-4 is by giving them the Holy Spirit.

### **Concluding Remarks on Luke 11:1-13**

The exposition of Luke 11:1-13 has demonstrated how Jesus both taught and encouraged his disciples to pray. When a disciple asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray," he responded by giving them the model prayer found in 11:2-4. Christians may repeat this prayer verbatim and they may allow their prayers to be guided by the themes of each petition. In 11:5-13, Jesus employs several rhetorical strategies to encourage his disciples to pray by giving them assurance that their Father will graciously answer their prayers and will even give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. The instruction in this pericope is essential for ongoing catechesis in the church. For, disciples of Christ still need to be taught and encouraged to pray.

### **Corporate Prayer for Those outside the Congregation (1 Tim 2:1-7)**

God's people must come together to pray corporately for the physical and spiritual needs of those outside the congregation. Exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:1-7 will support this thesis by examining Paul's exhortation for the church to pray corporately for

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<sup>54</sup> Thompson, *Luke*, 186.

all people. This passage not only gives direction regarding who to pray for, but also gives compelling reasons to pray for them.

Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy in order to encourage him to combat false teachers and their influence among the saints in Ephesus (1:3). At least two of the false teachers have been excommunicated by Paul (1:20). Timothy must now continue to “wage the good warfare” (1:18). In 3:14-15, Paul explains the purpose of his letter, “I am writing these things to you so that . . . you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God.” He gives instructions on various matters throughout the letter, for instance, on the role of women during public worship, on what kind of people should serve as overseers and deacons, and on which widows the congregation should assist with material support. Philip H. Towner writes that in all the specific issues addressed by Paul, “The context throughout will continue to be that of false teaching and opposition to the Pauline mission.”<sup>55</sup> The first matter that Paul addresses is no exception, the Ephesian congregation’s incomplete, exclusive, practice of corporate prayer (2:1-7).

### **Exhortation to Pray Corporately for All People (2:1-2)**

In verse 1, Paul writes, “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.” The word, “then (οὕτως),” connects this first verse of chapter 2 with what Paul has written in chapter 1. In chapter 1, Paul charged Timothy to combat false teachers and their influence. The first exhortation of chapter 2 is in keeping with that charge, for the command to pray for all people opposes the practice and teaching of the false teachers.<sup>56</sup> William D. Mounce asserts, “It would appear that Paul’s opponents are teaching an exclusive gospel that offers salvation

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<sup>55</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 162.

<sup>56</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 76-77.

only to a select few, and this exclusivism is made clear by their practice of praying for only certain people.”<sup>57</sup> Mounce argues convincingly that the main topic in this pericope is salvation, not prayer. The false teachers taught an exclusive gospel that led them to leave out many, perhaps especially Gentiles, from their public prayers. Therefore, the lack of corporate prayer for all people, while problematic itself, is but a symptom of a greater malady, namely, a false, exclusivist doctrine of salvation.<sup>58</sup> Paul’s argument in 2:1-7 bears this out, with the prayer problem addressed primarily by the soteriological assertions found in verses 3-6.

Before progressing further in the argument, we should briefly discuss the four words used for prayer in 2:1: “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings.” Mounce writes, “It is a Semitic literary device that groups synonyms to add luster to the basic concept (see the description of wisdom in Prov 1:1-6). Although each of these words can describe slightly different types of prayers . . . , that is not the point here. The point is that all prayers, of all types, should be for all people.”<sup>59</sup> Towner agrees, “Rather than understand the four terms as descriptive of a systematic liturgy of prayer, the thought is one of completeness—every dimension and action of prayer being focused on the need at hand.”<sup>60</sup> However, George W. Knight III avers, “The four words for prayer may be synonyms, repeated to give emphasis to the request, or, more likely, they may represent distinguishable nuances that Paul wanted to specify (the last term is certainly different from the others).”<sup>61</sup> After giving more thorough definitions, Knight briefly gives the specific nuance of each term, “δεήσεις, making requests for specific needs;

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<sup>57</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 76.

<sup>58</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 76.

<sup>59</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 79.

<sup>60</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 166.

<sup>61</sup> George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 114.

προσευχὰς, bringing those in view before God; ἐντεῦξαις, appealing boldly on their behalf; and εὐχαριστίας, thankfulness for them.”<sup>62</sup> I agree with Mounce and Towner that this is an example of Paul piling up synonyms to make an emphatic point. However, reflecting on the meaning of the specific words for prayer in 2:1, as Knight suggests, may help the congregation appreciate the variety and scope of its prayers during public worship.

The last phrase of 2:1 is the most important for the flow of Paul’s argument: “for all people.” This is the specific point of conflict with the false teachers. Towner observes that the term, “all,” is used six times in this passage “in ways that clearly underline the universal scope of the discussion.”<sup>63</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson says that this phrase (“for all people”) is “the first of several remarkable universalizing statements in 2:1-7: God wills the salvation ‘of all people’ (2:4), Jesus is the mediator between God and ‘people’ (2:5), he gave himself as a ransom ‘for all’ (2:6), and Paul proclaims him to the ‘nations/Gentiles’ (2:7).”<sup>64</sup> Therefore, as mentioned above, the heresy Paul fights in this passage is a doctrine of salvation that excludes some. This error finds expression when the congregation limits the scope of its prayers to benefit only a select portion of humanity. Against this, Paul urges that all kinds of prayers should be made “for all people” (2:1).

In verse 2, Paul continues his argument by clarifying who should be included in “all people.” He writes, “for kings and all who are in high positions.” Mounce states, “in contrast to examples of secular prayers, Christians’ prayers are ὑπὲρ, ‘on behalf of,’ and not πρὸς, ‘to,’ the rulers.”<sup>65</sup> Christians could not in good conscience pray to their

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<sup>62</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 115.

<sup>63</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 165.

<sup>64</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, vol. 35A (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 189.

<sup>65</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 81.

rulers, sacrifice, or burn incense to idols, like their pagan neighbors. However, Paul says they must pray for their secular authorities. This harmonizes with Paul's teaching in Romans 13 that Christians should be subject to the authorities and that the rulers are God's servants to carry out justice.

Paul gives the purpose for praying for all people, including kings and those in authority, with the ἵνα phrase, "that (ἵνα) we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way" (2:2b). I. Howard Marshall explains that the ἵνα phrase may express the purpose, content, or the result of the prayer, but concludes that "here probably the purpose or the intended result that should come from prayer for the authorities is in view."<sup>66</sup> Mounce agrees that the ἵνα phrase "gives not the content of those prayers but their purpose (ἵνα): that Christians might 'live out their lives in tranquility and calmness with complete reverence and godly dignity.'"<sup>67</sup> This stated purpose need not be construed as the sole purpose of the congregation's prayers for all people. For, the thrust of the whole argument in this pericope leads to the conclusion that the chief purpose of prayers for all people is for their salvation. However, the stated purpose in 2:2 is in harmony with this chief purpose. As Towner suggests, "Prayer for the tranquil setting is prayer for an ideal set of social circumstances in which Christians might give unfettered expression to their faith in observable living."<sup>68</sup> The kind of life described in 2:2b would surely serve the Christian mission.

Mounce writes that the two pairs of terms in this verse aptly describe the goal of the Christian life: ἡρεμον καὶ ἡσύχιον ("peace and tranquility") and εὐσεβείᾳ καὶ σεμνότητι ("reverence and godly dignity").<sup>69</sup> Marshall, commenting on the last pair of

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<sup>66</sup> I. Howard Marshall and Philip Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 422.

<sup>67</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 82.

<sup>68</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 170.

<sup>69</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 84.

terms, writes, “The behaviour of believers should be such as to win respect from other people because they take life seriously and devoutly and do not trifle. Hence εὐσεβεία and σεμνότης together describe a life that is completely acceptable both to God and people.”<sup>70</sup> Paul may be showing his concern in this verse for the reputation of believers among outsiders. He makes this concern explicit in a similar passage from 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, where he calls them “to aspire to live quietly . . . so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.” If this concern is also implied in the purpose clause of 1 Timothy 2:2, then an outward, even missional, goal may be latently present here. Such purpose will be made explicit later in 2:7.

### **Theological Basis for Praying for All People (2:3-7)**

In 1 Timothy 2:3, Paul begins to give the basis for his exhortation in verse 1. The Ephesians should make all kinds of prayers for all people because “this (τοῦτο) is good and pleasing in the sight of God our Savior.” Many manuscripts include a variant reading that adds γὰρ after τοῦτο.<sup>71</sup> Although this addition is not likely original, Knight says that the variant makes explicit what was already implicit, namely, that this phrase is a ground (γὰρ) for what came before.<sup>72</sup> Both Knight and Towner draw attention to the phrase, “good and pleasing before God,” because it is similar to a formulaic phrase used in Deuteronomy for practices that are “good and right before God” (see LXX, Deut 12:25, 28; 13:19; 21:9—where, however ἀρεστός is used rather than ἀπόδεκτος).<sup>73</sup> Towner avers that the term, “acceptable (ἀπόδεκτος),” from 1 Timothy 2:3 “calls to mind the use of the word group in Leviticus to describe sacrifices as ‘acceptable’ to God.” For

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<sup>70</sup> Marshall and Towner, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 423.

<sup>71</sup> Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 190.

<sup>72</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 118.

<sup>73</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 119; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 176.

Towner, this suggests that the congregation's practice of corporate prayer is as essential for worship today as the sacrificial system was for the old covenant people of God.<sup>74</sup>

The most important word, for the flow of Paul's argument, in 1 Timothy 2:3 is "savior," because it ties in with the main theme of this pericope, salvation. Towner writes, "The title is apt, for the controlling theme of the passage is salvation, and 'Savior' depicts God as the source and architect of the plan to rescue humanity through Christ."<sup>75</sup> The significance of this title is increased by noticing how seldom Paul uses it for God. Johnson says that Paul uses this title for God "only in the three letters to his delegates (1 Tim 1:1; 4:10; Tit 1:3; 2:10; 3:4)," but, he adds that the concept of God as savior "is implicit in all of Paul's language about God's power to save (e.g., Rom 1:16; 10:1; 1 Thess 5:9; 2 Thess 2:13)."<sup>76</sup> The phrase, "God our Savior," is explained further in the following verse, 1 Timothy 2:4.

Paul continues, "who desires all people<sup>77</sup> to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). Mounce says that this verse gives a crucial reason why the congregation should pray for all people and not just a select few: "it is pleasing to God because it is in line with his basic desire that all people be saved."<sup>78</sup> The implication within Paul's argument is clear. If God desires all people to be saved, then why is the Ephesian congregation not praying for them? This malpractice needs to change. Their corporate prayers should harmonize with God's desire for all to be saved. Paul's main exhortation in verse 1, that the church should pray for all people, is bolstered

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<sup>74</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 177.

<sup>75</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 176.

<sup>76</sup> Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 190.

<sup>77</sup> I take "all people" to include every single person. For this view, see Marshall and Towner, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 426. For a different view, see Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 119, who argues that "all people" means "all kinds of people." See Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 84-85, for something of a mediating position.

<sup>78</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 84.

by the fact that “God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2:4).

Regarding the last phrase of 2:4, “and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” Marshall writes that this infinitive phrase “spells out the meaning of σωθῆναι with a hendiadys.”<sup>79</sup> That is, the phrase “to be saved,” and “to come to the knowledge of the truth” refer to the same reality, although the two phrases view the same reality from different vantage points. Marshall further asserts that “εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν is a technical phrase in the [Pastoral epistles] for coming to faith in Christ.”<sup>80</sup> Mounce agrees, “Knowing the truth is equivalent to accepting the gospel message and emphasizes the cognitive element in the acceptance.”<sup>81</sup> Paul’s argument so far is this: since it is God’s will for all to be saved then we should certainly pray for this to happen to all people. This is good and pleasing in the sight of God our Savior.

Paul continues his argument with another supporting statement in 2:5a, “For (γὰρ) there is one God.” Towner points to Romans 3:29-30 to better understand how Paul is using the phrase, “there is one God,” as part of his argument in 1 Timothy 2:5. In Romans 3:29-30, Paul writes, “Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.” In this passage, Paul argues for the inclusion of the Gentiles because there is one God. Jew and Gentile alike must be saved by this one God and they must be saved through faith in him. Although the argument is more compressed in 1 Timothy 2:5, Paul is likely making the same point as in Romans 3:29-30. The fact that there is one God implies that there is no other God who can save the Gentiles. Towner concludes, “In Paul’s missiology, the formula ‘God is one’ yields

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<sup>79</sup> Marshall and Towner, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 427-28.

<sup>80</sup> Marshall and Towner, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 428.

<sup>81</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 86.

the logical corollary, ‘therefore all have access to his salvation, both Jews and Gentiles.’”<sup>82</sup> The further implication is that the congregation should pray for all people to the only God who can save them.

First Timothy 2:5 continues, “and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” The logical argument here is the same as in the previous phrase. If there is only one mediator, then it is necessary for all people to approach the one God through the one mediator, the man Christ Jesus. The humanity of Christ is emphasized here because he accomplished his saving work of mediation as a human. As Towner asserts, “What Jesus did to execute God’s universal will to save he did as a human being.”<sup>83</sup> The Nicene Creed also testifies to this truth, describing the Lord Jesus Christ as one “who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man . . . .”<sup>84</sup> Therefore, the only way for human beings to be reconciled to God is through the one mediator, the human being Christ Jesus.

Verse 6 continues with a relative pronominal clause that further describes Christ Jesus: “who gave himself as a ransom for all.” Before we interpret this phrase, we should notice a parallel construction between this phrase and the first phrase of verse 4. Verse 4 also begins with a relative pronominal clause that further describes God as the one “who desires all people to be saved.” Verse 6 begins with the same structure, giving more information about Christ Jesus, “who gave himself as a ransom for all.” Knight says that this phrase “specifies the way in which Christ served as the mediator, namely, by giving up his life for all.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 180.

<sup>83</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 183.

<sup>84</sup> Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 27-28.

<sup>85</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 121.

Knight points out the similarity between the first phrase of verse 6 and Matthew 20:28 (par. Mark 10:45), where Jesus declares that he came “to give his life as a ransom for many.” We should note that while Jesus describes the beneficiaries of his death as “many,” Paul describes the same beneficiaries with the word, “all.” They refer to the same group.<sup>86</sup> Knight defines “ransom (ἀντίλυτρον)” from 1 Timothy 2:6 like this: “ἀντίλυτρον represents a price paid to free captives and thus means ‘ransom,’ or more appropriately, ‘substitute-ransom,’ as L. Morris renders it, noting the emphasis on the thought of substitution in the preposition.”<sup>87</sup> Mounce says that Paul’s statement in 2:6 builds further on his earlier statement from 1:15, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”<sup>88</sup> Now, in 2:6, the manner of his saving work is clarified: he gave himself as a ransom for all. Mounce comments, “In both 1 Tim 2:6 and Titus 2:14 the price of the ransom is emphasized: Christ gave himself. This complements the essential message of the paragraph: because Christ’s death for all people was so costly, to exclude people from the offer of salvation is especially horrendous.”<sup>89</sup> Mounce does well to remind us that the purpose of this phrase in Paul’s argument is to further ground his exhortation in verse 1 that the congregation ought to pray for all people. The word “all” is repeated for the sixth and final time in this pericope. Because Christ died as a ransom for *all*, we should pray for all people.

The last phrase of verse 6 reads, “which is the testimony (τὸ μαρτύριον) given at the proper time.” Knight remarks, “τὸ μαρτύριον is nominative or accusative absolute in apposition to the preceding clause.”<sup>90</sup> This means that the previous statement, that

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<sup>86</sup> See how Paul can also use the word “many” to mean “all” in Rom 5:15 (cf. Isa 53:11).

<sup>87</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 121. Knight gives this citation: Leon Morris, *Apostolic Preaching*, 51; cf. also F. Buchsel, *TDNT IV*, 349.

<sup>88</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 89.

<sup>89</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 90.

<sup>90</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 123.

Christ gave himself as a ransom for all, *is* the testimony given at the proper time. In his commentary, Mounce surveys four interpretive questions about this difficult phrase, which I do not have space to reproduce here.<sup>91</sup> Several of the scholars cited by Mounce agree that this phrase means that Christ's ransoming death for all is God's witness to the world of his love or of the fulfillment of his promises. Mounce himself arrives at this conclusion, "Christ's ransom for all people is the appropriate witness to the Ephesian church that they are not to exclude anyone from the offer of salvation."<sup>92</sup> Mounce does well to show how this phrase, which has universal significance, applies to the particular situation Paul is addressing in 1 Timothy 2.

What is the significance of the last phrase of verse 6, "at the proper time"? The commentaries note that Paul uses the same phrase in 1 Timothy 6:15 and Titus 1:3. In 1 Timothy 6:15 it refers to the time of Christ's return and in Titus 1:3 it refers to the time God has chosen to make the gospel manifest through Paul and the other apostles. Paul seems to use this phrase for the manifestation of significant events in salvation history. Thus, it is not surprising that Paul uses the phrase in 1 Timothy 2:6 to refer to the time of Christ's ransoming death.

Paul now moves from soteriology to missiology to support his main exhortation. He concludes in 1 Timothy 2:7, "For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." Mounce argues that when Paul writes, "I am speaking the truth; I am not lying," he is defending himself against the false teachers who opposed his mission to the Gentiles.<sup>93</sup> The construction of verse 7 is conceptually (if not grammatically) similar to the relative clauses that began verses 4 and 6. Those clauses further described "God our Savior" and

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<sup>91</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 90-91.

<sup>92</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 91.

<sup>93</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 92.

“Christ Jesus,” respectively. The clause which begins 2:7 now further describes the testimony given at the proper time. Namely, it is that testimony for which (εἰς ὃ) Paul has been appointed by God to be a preacher and apostle to the Gentiles. God has commanded him to proclaim the gospel of Christ’s ransoming death to them. This is Paul’s final ground for his initial exhortation. Mounce articulates it like this, “Finally, Paul emphasizes that God sent him as an apostle, a herald, and especially as a teacher for the Gentiles, people whom the opponents were excluding.”<sup>94</sup> If God appointed Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, then the congregation should certainly participate in his apostolic work through their corporate prayers for all people, including Gentiles.

### **Conclusion and Summary of 1 Tim 2:1-7**

Paul’s fundamental exhortation in this pericope is for the Ephesian congregation to pray for all people (2:1-2). The rest of the passage contains theological support for this main exhortation. Why should the congregation pray for all people? (1) Because it pleases God, who desires all people to be saved (2:3-4). (2) Because there is only one God and there is only one mediator, and if people will be saved, it must be by this one God and through this one mediator (2:5). (3) Because the one mediator, Christ Jesus, gave himself as a ransom for all people (2:6). (4) Because God appointed Paul to be a preacher of this gospel to all people (2:7).<sup>95</sup> Taken together, these arguments make a compelling case for the Ephesian congregation, and for all Christian congregations, to make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for all people (2:1).

### **Corporate Prayer for Those within the Congregation (Jas 5:13-18)**

This passage from the end of James has been selected for exegesis because of its clear exhortation to corporate prayer in the congregation. Unlike the last section from

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<sup>94</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 94.

<sup>95</sup> For a similar list, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 93-94.

1 Timothy 2, which focused on the importance of corporate prayer for those outside the congregation, this section focuses on the necessity of corporate prayer for one another in the congregation. This section supports the thesis of this chapter by demonstrating that God's people must come together to pray corporately for the physical and spiritual needs of those within the congregation.

### **Prayer in James and the Structure of 5:13-18**

Prayer is one of the many subjects that James addresses in this letter. Its first mention is in James 1:5-6, where he writes, "If any one of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind." James encourages his recipients to pray by promising them that God gives generously to those who ask. Further, he teaches the proper way to pray, namely, with faith and without doubting. The next time James teaches about prayer is in chapter 4, where he warns against worldliness and calls his recipients to repentance. One of his admonitions in this section is about prayer: "You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (4:2-3). Here, James once more teaches about the proper way to pray. People pray wrongly when they ask for things in order to gratify their sinful desires. Later, in 4:8-10, James calls his audience to repentance. Although he does not explicitly mention prayer in these verses, he probably envisions confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness to be essential components of how his audience would respond to his exhortation. James reserves his most extended treatment of prayer for near the end of his letter, 5:13-18. Exposition of this passage will follow some brief remarks about its structure.

Regarding the structure of this pericope, Chris A. Vlachos points out that the unit is characterized by six imperative verbs.<sup>96</sup> There is a marked difference between the first four imperatives and the last two. Vlachos writes, “The first four are introduced by a question/condition (‘Is?/If . . .’) and are expressed in the 3rd pers. sg. (‘he or she should’); the last two are expressed in the 2nd pers. pl.”<sup>97</sup> With the first four imperatives, James instructs his listeners about what they should do in various situations (when someone is suffering, cheerful, or sick). These first four imperatives have limited application in that they give instructions only for when these situations arise, although the situations described may occur frequently. The last two imperatives, found in verse 16, are more general in scope. James wants his recipients to obey all six imperatives as a regular part of their corporate life. The first four are tied to specific situations, while the last two are more general and apply to all times.

### **Specific Kinds of Prayer for Specific Situations (5:13-15)**

In verse 13, James gives two commands in response to two different questions: “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.” Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell find similarity between these two imperatives near the end of the letter and an imperative near the beginning. They write, “Just as the general call to rejoice in trials (1:2-4) led to the command to pray for wisdom (v. 5), so too prayer is the proper response to suffering in sickness.”<sup>98</sup> The imperatives in 1:5 and 5:13 are structured similarly, too, following the “if/is? . . . let him” pattern. Regarding the third person, singular, imperative, and commenting specifically on James 1:5, Daniel B.

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<sup>96</sup> Chris A. Vlachos, *James*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 182.

<sup>97</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 182.

<sup>98</sup> Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 238.

Wallace writes, “The force of the imperative is probably not a mere urging or permission, but a command, in spite of the typical English rendering. An expanded gloss is, ‘If anyone of you lacks wisdom, *he must ask* of God.’”<sup>99</sup> Wallace’s gloss helps readers of the ESV or similar translations realize that when James says, “let him pray” he is not giving an optional suggestion, but an obligatory command.

What kind of suffering does James have in mind with his first question in 5:13? Scot McKnight finds contextual reference to the economic suffering of the poor at the hands of rich farmers (see 5:1-6) and so he limits the suffering mentioned in 5:13 to a kind of “suffering of the poor at the hand of the abusively powerful.”<sup>100</sup> However, both Vlachos and Douglas J. Moo favor a more general interpretation of suffering in 5:13.<sup>101</sup> Vlachos and Moo are likely correct because James’s admonition in 5:13 is far-removed from his reference to economic oppression in 5:1-6. Furthermore, the diverse situations covered in 5:13-15 favor a more general interpretation of “suffering” in 5:13. With the reference to suffering in 5:13, Moo notices a thematic return to the beginning of the letter. He writes, “James thus brings us full circle at the end of his letter, back to the ‘trials of many kinds’ that he introduced as a basic community problem in 1:2.” In both places, prayer is the appropriate response to suffering/trials.

When James commands those who suffer to pray in 5:13, what should they pray for? It is natural to assume they should pray for God to alleviate their suffering. Moo considers it possible that this prayer would “include petition to God to remove the trial.”<sup>102</sup> However, Moo continues, “But James’s concern when he deals with trials

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<sup>99</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 486.

<sup>100</sup> Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 433.

<sup>101</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 182. Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 235.

<sup>102</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 235.

elsewhere (1:2-4, 12; 5:7-11) is to encourage believers to endure the suffering with the right spirit and with a divine perspective on history. Presumably, then, the prayer that he encourages here is for the spiritual strength to endure the trial with a godly spirit.”<sup>103</sup> As Moo argues, this interpretation is in harmony with what James tells his readers to pray for in chapter 1. However, it is best not to exclude the possibility that the prayer may be for God to remove the cause of suffering. We see this kind of prayer at times in the Psalms (e.g., Pss 6, 13, and 38). The interpretation of Blomberg and Kamell is more inclusive: “In prayer we enlist the aid and ear of ‘the Lord of Hosts’ (recall 5:4), our God who is more than capable of righting our wrongs and helping us in our pain.”<sup>104</sup> Also helpful is the interpretation of Peter H. Davids, “In the context . . . persecutions like those of the prophets (5:10), the suffering at the hands of the wealthy, and similar personally distressing situations should be included.”<sup>105</sup> James does not specify in 5:13 exactly what those suffering are to pray for, therefore we should not limit the possibilities too much. Nor should this endeavor distract us. The emphasis is upon his command to pray.

The second imperative of 5:13 is that those who are cheerful should sing praise. This the opposite situation from the suffering just mentioned. It is possible that by highlighting opposite ends of the spectrum, James intends to show that people should orient their hearts to God in every possible situation. In this second imperative, James commands the “cheerful” (ESV) or “happy” (NIV) person who is “in good spirits” (NET) to sing praise. Commenting on the imperative verb, ψαλλέτω, Moo comments that “all three of its other NT occurrences connote a song of praise to God (Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19).”<sup>106</sup> He also says the present tense of this imperative “adds the nuance

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<sup>103</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 235.

<sup>104</sup> Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 241.

<sup>105</sup> Peter H. Davids, *James*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 15 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 191-92.

<sup>106</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 236.

of continual or repeated action.”<sup>107</sup> With the two imperatives of 5:13, James commands his audience to habitually direct their hearts and lips to God, whether they experience hardships or blessings.

James 5:14 contains the third and fourth imperative verbs which should be obeyed when a member of the congregation is sick. “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” James does not command the sick person to pray (perhaps that is implied) but to call upon the elders, who are then commanded to pray for the sick person. Moo writes, “Since the elders are summoned to the sick person, we may assume that the sickness is serious enough to restrict the mobility of the sufferer.”<sup>108</sup> And who are the elders of the church? Moo thinks that “elders” in this passage refers to an official position held by spiritually mature men who served as the leaders in the congregation.<sup>109</sup> If someone becomes very sick, they should call for these spiritual leaders to pray for them.

The first imperative in 5:14 is for the sick person to call on the elders. The second is for the elders to pray over him. What is meant by the prepositional phrase “over him (ἐπ’ αὐτόν)”? Vlachos says that “the combination Προσεύχομαι + ἐπί occurs nowhere else in [biblical Greek].” He gives the following interpretive options: (1) prayer over the prone individual; (2) prayer for the individual; or (3) to place hands upon the individual (for this last option he cites a similar construction in Matthew 19:13).<sup>110</sup> Moo also comes to a similar conclusion, saying the phrase “might picture the elders standing over the sick person. However, it might also be shorthand for laying hands on the person

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<sup>107</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 236.

<sup>108</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 238.

<sup>109</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 237. So also Vlachos, *James*, 184. For a different view, see McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 436.

<sup>110</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 184.

during the praying (see Matt. 19:13).”<sup>111</sup> Given the uncertainty of the precise meaning of this phrase, church elders today should not be distracted or dogmatic about what they do with their hands when they are called to pray for a sick person. The most important thing is that they follow James’s command to pray for the sick person when they are called to do so.

James 5:14 contains a participial phrase that describes the manner in which the elders should pray over the sick person: “anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord (ἀλείψαντες αὐτὸν ἐλαίῳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου).” The main imperative verb is προσευξάσθωσαν, while the participle (ἀλείψαντες) describes concurrent action, according to Vlachos.<sup>112</sup> The main command is to pray, but as they pray over the sick person they should anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. What is the significance of anointing with oil? The commentaries wrestle with this question at length. Vlachos succinctly organizes the interpretive options into three main categories. Scholars view the anointing with oil as (1) medicinal, (2) sacramental, or (3) consecrative.<sup>113</sup> Moo gives an extensive treatment of the issue, surveying the options and arriving at this conclusion, “We conclude, therefore, that ‘anoint’ in v. 14 refers to a physical action with symbolic significance . . . . As the elders pray, they are to anoint the sick person in order to symbolize that that person is being set apart for God’s special attention and care.”<sup>114</sup> Thus, Moo favors the “consecrative” option as outlined by Vlachos. Blomberg and Kamell seem to agree, writing, “The oil is the symbol of God’s presence, but prayer is the mechanism for tapping into his power.”<sup>115</sup> They go on to give sound advice for the pastoral application of this verse in the church today:

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<sup>111</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 238.

<sup>112</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 184.

<sup>113</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 185.

<sup>114</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 242.

<sup>115</sup> Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 243.

Given the overall teaching of the NT, in which healing is not consistently paired with anointing, we should not take this one verse as mandating that oil must accompany *all* prayers for the sick. At the same time, there is no reason not to implement a practice like this one for some of the most chronic or life-threatening illnesses that church members face.<sup>116</sup>

In order to encourage the elders to pray as he commanded them in verse 14, James adds this promise in verse 15: “And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.” The elders are assured that their prayer, so long as it is a “prayer of faith,” will save the one who is sick. Of course, the Lord is the one who will save and raise up the sick person in response to the prayer. The verb “will save,” in this context, refers to physical healing.<sup>117</sup> Although some argue it points to eschatological salvation, as well.<sup>118</sup> The second verb phrase, “will raise him up,” is synonymous with the first and also refers to physical healing. Vlachos, citing BDAG, gives this gloss: “and the Lord will raise him from his bed of sickness.”<sup>119</sup> The main interpretive question in 5:15 concerns the meaning of “the prayer of faith.” Vlachos rightly says this phrase “harks back to the ‘let him ask *in faith*’ of 1:6; i.e., it is a prayer that is fully convinced that God will answer the prayer.”<sup>120</sup> McKnight points to the connection between faith and healing in other New Testament passages, especially in the Gospels. He writes, “Faith is particularly connected to healing (Mark 2:5; 5:34, 36; 9:23; 10:52; Acts 14:9), and without faith one does not obtain healing (Mark 6:6).”<sup>121</sup> McKnight demonstrates that James’s instruction and promise regarding the prayer of faith is in line with Jesus’s healing ministry and teaching in the Gospels.

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<sup>116</sup> Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 243 (emphasis original).

<sup>117</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 186-87. Moo, *The Letter of James*, 243.

<sup>118</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 187.

<sup>119</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 187. Vlachos cites BDAG, 272a.

<sup>120</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 186. Vlachos cites Davids, *James*, 194.

<sup>121</sup> McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 441.

Are there any limits to James's promise about the prayer of faith? Will every sick person be healed so long as the elders have enough faith? If the person is not healed, is it because of a lack of faith? Before qualifying James's promise too much, we should recognize the simple truth that "this verse makes the bold claim that if we pray in faith, God will heal the person for whom we pray."<sup>122</sup> Yet the rest of the biblical record, and even the letter of James, encourages us to add some qualification. Blomberg and Kamell write, "these commands also assume the proviso of 4:15 in which everything for which we hope remains contingent on God's will."<sup>123</sup> In the verse to which they point, 4:15, James writes, "Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will do this or that.'" Blomberg and Kamell argue that the assumption at work in 4:15 should remain as the elders pray for the sick. Moo concurs, writing that "The faith exercised in prayer is faith in the God who sovereignly accomplishes his will. When we pray, our faith recognizes, explicitly or implicitly, the overruling providential purposes of God."<sup>124</sup> This qualification, however, should not cause the elders to doubt that God will hear and answer their prayer. The very point of the phrase, "prayer of faith," is to encourage the elders to believe that God will indeed heal the sick person for whom they pray.

James 5:15 concludes with these words: "And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." Although many in the ancient world believed there to be a direct causal relationship between sin and sickness, James does not assume that to be the case here.<sup>125</sup> However, James acknowledges that such a relationship is possible. Vlachos classifies 5:15b as a third-class condition and says, "There is neither an implication of uncertainty, nor is there an assumption of likelihood; the conjunction [καὶ] introduces a

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<sup>122</sup> Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 243.

<sup>123</sup> Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 244.

<sup>124</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 244.

<sup>125</sup> McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 443.

possibility.”<sup>126</sup> James introduces a hypothetical situation which may or may not occur. But if the sick person has indeed committed sins (presumably, sins that led to the sickness), then he will be forgiven. McKnight finds appropriate background here in Psalm 103:3, where David praises the Lord, “who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases.”<sup>127</sup> Commentators also point to Mark 2, where Jesus both forgives the sins of the paralyzed man and heals his paralysis.<sup>128</sup>

### **Corporate Confession of Sin and Prayer for One Another (5:16-18)**

James 5:16 marks a shift in rhetoric and form. As noted by Vlachos above, the first four commands in this pericope are third person, singular, imperatives given in response to questions regarding specific situations (suffering, cheerfulness, or sickness). On the basis of the previous verses (5:13-15), James now makes two commands in the second person, plural, that are more general in scope. He writes, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (5:16a). Moo rightly comments, “The *therefore* shows that the exhortation to mutual confession and prayer in this verse is the conclusion that the readers are to draw from the discussion of prayer in vv. 13-15.”<sup>129</sup> In light of the wonderful promise that God will answer the prayer of faith and heal the sick person, as stated in verse 15, the whole congregation should regularly be confessing their sins and praying to one another. McKnight comments on the imperative verbs of verse 16, “The present imperatives are appropriate: James wants confession and intercession to be characteristic of the community.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 187.

<sup>127</sup> McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 444.

<sup>128</sup> See, for instance, Davids, *James*, 194.

<sup>129</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 245.

<sup>130</sup> McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 445n90.

There are many examples of corporate confession of sin in the Old Testament and apocryphal literature. Davids cites examples of leaders confessing Israel’s sin on their behalf, like Aaron, Daniel, Judith, or Baruch.<sup>131</sup> In the last instance, all the Jewish exiles join in the confession: “They wept, fasted, and prayed before the Lord” (Bar 1:5). In Numbers 21, the Israelites confess their sin of speaking against Moses and against God in order to be saved from the fiery serpents. In Judges 10, they confess their idolatry in order to be saved from the Ammonites. Davids also references examples of corporate confession in the New Testament.<sup>132</sup> In Mark 1:5, many Jews respond to the preaching of John the Baptist by being baptized and by confessing their sins (Davids assumes, publicly). In Acts 19:18, many Jews and Greeks who became believers in Ephesus openly confessed their sins and divulged their practices. This practice continued beyond New Testament times. McKnight cites Didache 4:14, which says, “In church you shall confess your transgressions, and you shall not approach your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.”<sup>133</sup> After citing many biblical and extrabiblical examples, McKnight concludes, “James’s words then are not a new instruction; they speak of an old practice of admitting one’s guilt before God and others and now urge the same on the messianic community.”<sup>134</sup> In James 5:16, the command to confess sins to one another is not limited to a particular situation (like Jesus’s instructions are in Matt 18:15), but is open-ended. Thus, Vlachos concludes, “James is probably thinking of mutual confession rather than inter-church reconciliation.”<sup>135</sup>

The second imperative in James 5:16 is to “pray for one another, that you may be healed.” Vlachos comments, “As with the previous [imperative], the present tense

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<sup>131</sup> Davids, *James*, 195.

<sup>132</sup> Davids, *James*, 195.

<sup>133</sup> McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 445.

<sup>134</sup> McKnight, *The Letter of James*, 446.

<sup>135</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 188.

emphasizes habitual practice.”<sup>136</sup> James commands his audience to continually pray for one another. The purpose of both corporate confession to one another and corporate prayer for one another is “that you may be healed (ὅπως ἰαθῆτε).”<sup>137</sup> Does this purpose clause indicate that James limits the purpose of confession and prayer to the attainment of physical healing? Moo thinks that is what James is saying in this case. Because healing from sickness is in the near context, and because the verb ἰάομαι, when used independently, “is always applied to a physical malady,” Moo thinks James’s stated purpose is for the physical healing of believers.<sup>138</sup> However, this verb can be used metaphorically for spiritual healing.<sup>139</sup> Blomberg and Kamell write that this verb “can refer to physical or spiritual cures as the context dictates. Here it seems to refer to restored spiritual well-being due to confession and forgiveness.”<sup>140</sup> Perhaps James intends his audience to view both physical and spiritual healing as the purpose for their corporate confession and prayer. Though, as Moo argues, James may be focusing here on the physical healing of those who are sick. Even if Moo is correct, spiritual healing will also come as a result of corporate confession of sin and prayer, as other biblical passages attest.

The last sentence of James 5:16 is meant to encourage his recipients to pray: “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” James already spoke about the effectiveness of the prayer of faith made by the elders in verse 15. In verse 16, he now extends this effectiveness to all righteous members of the congregation. Davids says, “It is the *ordinary* member in good standing, not just the elders or prophets, whose

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<sup>136</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 188.

<sup>137</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 188.

<sup>138</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 246.

<sup>139</sup> Vlachos, *James*, 189.

<sup>140</sup> Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 245.

prayer is powerful, as the following example shows.”<sup>141</sup> Moo concurs, defining the righteous person to be “simply the believer, the person who is ‘righteous’ by virtue of receiving forgiveness through Jesus and is therefore part of the people of God. Prayer, James wants to make clear, is a powerful weapon in the hands even of the humblest believer; it does not require a ‘super saint’ to wield it effectively.”<sup>142</sup> As the previous verses make clear, James is at least thinking about effective prayers for healing. However, the full context suggests that James has in mind effective prayers for various situations and outcomes (cf. the prayer of the suffering in verse 13 and the prayer for rain in verse 18).

In verses 17-18 James puts forward Elijah as an example of a righteous person whose prayers were answered by God. First, he prayed that it would not rain, and it did not for three years and six months. Then he prayed that it would rain, and God sent rain that caused the earth to bear fruit. The most crucial part of this illustration for James’s argument is that “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours” (5:17). Blomberg and Kamell comment that “His ability to pray and obtain results did not stem from his differing from us in any way.” And, “James makes it clear that we have this same ability to pray powerfully.”<sup>143</sup> James does not want his audience to view Elijah as extraordinary but as exemplary. He wants his audience to pray fervently like Elijah and to believe that God will act and respond as he has before.

### **Concluding Remarks on Jas 5:13-18**

In this pericope, James encourages corporate prayer for one another in the congregation. The first section calls for prayer in times of suffering and sickness, employing the elders in times of great sickness to pray for healing. When the sickness is

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<sup>141</sup> Davids, *James*, 196 (emphasis original).

<sup>142</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 247.

<sup>143</sup> Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 246.

the result of sin, there is also need for confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness. God promises to forgive and to heal. Moving beyond the specific situations of verses 13-15, James gives two general commands in verse 16 for all believers to confess their sins to one another and to pray for one another. He expects these practices to be ongoing and habitual in congregational life. This ongoing practice will result in physical healing when people fall sick and also in spiritual healing, as God forgives the sins of those who confess. Finally, James encourages his audience that the prayers of righteous people, like the prayers of Elijah, are powerful and effective. God will certainly hear and answer the prayers of his people who ask in faith. This pericope is a powerful exhortation to corporate prayer for one another in the congregation.

### **Conclusion**

The exposition of the passages above has demonstrated the thesis of this chapter, that God's people must be taught how to pray, they must be encouraged to pray, and they must come together to pray corporately for the physical and spiritual needs of those outside and within the congregation. Taken together, the exposition of the above passages from Luke 11, 1 Timothy 2, and James 5 clearly shows that God commands his people to pray corporately. Further, in each of these passages, the command to pray is grounded in God's gracious promises. In Luke 11, Jesus grounds his command to pray in several illustrations that show how eager God is to hear and answer prayer, and even to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. In 1 Timothy 2, Paul's command to pray for all people is grounded in the gracious truths of the gospel, that God desires all people to be saved, that Christ Jesus is the one mediator who has given himself as a ransom for all, and that God has appointed Paul to be a preacher of this gospel to all people. Finally, in James 5, the command to pray is grounded in the gracious promises that God will answer the prayers of those who ask in faith by helping them in their suffering, by healing those who are sick, and by forgiving those who have sinned. Therefore, the New Testament

command to pray corporately is grounded in God's promise to graciously hear and answer such prayer.

## CHAPTER 3

### HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO THE PROJECT

In this chapter I begin with a brief and very selective historical survey of corporate prayer in the church in order to show its importance and to understand various instances of its method. Following the historical survey, I offer a sampling of mostly contemporary methods for corporate prayer in order to weigh their strengths and weaknesses for use at SLC. Finally, I suggest a method or combination of methods which seem most beneficial for equipping the leaders of SLC to lead prayer meetings.

#### **Brief Historical Survey of Corporate Prayer**

This paper cannot give a complete survey of how the church has prayed corporately throughout the centuries. Instead, I have chosen to focus on how the church prayed together in the first few centuries and then how the Lutheran church has prayed corporately following the reformation of the sixteenth century. I chose these two eras because (1) it is good to learn from the wisdom of those who lived in the time period nearest the apostles and who sought to carry on the apostolic tradition and (2) SLC is a Lutheran congregation and would benefit from studying the corporate prayer habits of Christians within its own tradition.

#### **Corporate Prayer in the Early Church**

From the very beginning, Christians prayed corporately on a regular basis and viewed this practice as vital to its spiritual life. Three examples from Acts should suffice to demonstrate this practice, though more could certainly be given. Acts 2:42 describes the regular practice of the newly formed church in Jerusalem: “And they devoted

themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Thus, prayer, or "the prayers" was one of four things this congregation continually devoted themselves to. We see the importance of corporate prayer again in Acts 4:23-31 when the believers pray for boldness in the face of persecution. They quote from Psalm 2 in this prayer because they believe David's ancient words apply to their current situation. In response to their prayer, "the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (4:31). The last example I will share from Acts occurs in chapter 13 when the church at Antioch was gathered for public worship. The Holy Spirit instructed them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work that God had called them to. In verse 3, Luke writes, "Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off." The corporate prayer of this congregation, seeking the Lord's favor upon the coming mission, gave strength to Saul and Barnabas to do what God had called them to. These three examples in Acts show that the earliest Christian congregations, under the influence of the Holy Spirit and the instruction of the apostles, were devoted to corporate prayer. As M. M. B. Turner writes, "The church in Acts is a church of prayer."<sup>1</sup>

Moving on from evidence in the New Testament, we see that the church of the first few centuries was likewise devoted to corporate prayer. At this juncture I will begin to underscore the various methods by which the church prayed corporately. The Didache (late first or second century) commands Christians to pray the Lord's Prayer three times each day (Did. 8.1-3).<sup>2</sup> The same section of the Didache also instructs believers to fast on the same two days each week (Wednesdays and Fridays) and to avoid fasting on the days that pagans normally fast (Mondays and Thursdays). Why is this important? Thomas

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<sup>1</sup> M. M. B. Turner, "Prayer in the Gospels and Acts," in *Teach Us to Pray: Prayer in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (1990; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 72.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas O'Loughlin, *The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 69.

O’Loughlin argues that by committing to set times and regular patterns of prayer and fasting, the Christian community was, in effect, offering a unified, single prayer to God.<sup>3</sup> This was true even if the Christians were praying alone in their homes. O’Loughlin remarks, “By fasting together on fixed days, the community of the *Didache* is fasting as a group: it is *the group* who prays. They are forming a single body at prayer, and so as a ‘new Israel’ this single prayer is heard.”<sup>4</sup> Committing to prayer and fasting on the same days gave their individual prayers a corporate solidarity.

In his book, *Ancient Christian Worship*, Andrew B. McGowan also mentions the set times and common patterns for prayer in the early church. This practice goes back to the Acts of the Apostles, which “describes the first Christians praying, alone or together, at specific times (10:9; 12:5; 16:25).”<sup>5</sup> McGowan says that this practice of praying at set times continued into the first several centuries of the church. He writes, “Many of the earliest Christians, like (other) Jews, certainly saw prayer as something to be performed a certain number of times during the day, and that number was often three. Again and again in the ancient sources, one version or another of the same pattern occurs: morning prayer, midday prayer, and afternoon or evening prayer.”<sup>6</sup> Whether alone or together, the earliest Christians valued praying at regular times with set patterns because this enhanced corporate solidarity.

McGowan includes comments on prayer from Tertullian, a church father in Carthage in the late second century. In his book on prayer, Tertullian instructed Christians to recite the Lord’s Prayer and then to build upon its petitions, to elaborate on

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<sup>3</sup> O’Loughlin, *The Didache*, 74-75.

<sup>4</sup> O’Loughlin, *The Didache*, 75 (emphasis original).

<sup>5</sup> Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 188.

<sup>6</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 188.

them, and to add their own petitions for various needs.<sup>7</sup> Tertullian also encouraged the use of the Psalter for prayer, especially the Hallel Psalms (Pss 113-118). When prayed corporately, people should pray the Psalms responsively, using communal responses for the endings or, when appropriate, adding “Alleluia.”<sup>8</sup> McGowan summarizes what we can learn from Tertullian’s instructions on prayer, “This exemplifies two important and persistent elements of Christian prayer: the use of the Lord’s Prayer as core text . . . and the Psalms (or some of them) as a resource.”<sup>9</sup>

Origen of Alexandria, writing in the second or third century, also offered an instruction manual on prayer. In addition to using the Lord’s Prayer as the core, he encourages Christians to continue in prayer along the following lines, “one should begin by glorifying God, move to thanksgiving, then confess sin, intercede, and finally ascribe praise (*On Prayer*, 33).”<sup>10</sup> For Origen, the Lord’s Prayer is the basis and beginning, but believers should continue in prayer along the themes of praise, thanksgiving, confession, and intercession.

McGowan summarizes what Christian writers in the second and third centuries taught about prayer: “The Lord’s Prayer was its center, but not its limit, and teaching about this prayer often gave rise to reflection on various issues, including and especially the proper times to say it and to pray in general.”<sup>11</sup> The three fixed times for prayer were to take place at the third, sixth, and ninth hours (roughly 9:00 a.m., noon, and 3:00 p.m.).<sup>12</sup> To these three set times, Christians were also encouraged to pray immediately

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<sup>7</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 190-91.

<sup>8</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 191.

<sup>9</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 191.

<sup>10</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 196.

<sup>11</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 198.

<sup>12</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 191.

upon waking and again just prior to going to sleep.<sup>13</sup> This makes for a total of five set times a day. Although Christians often prayed by themselves at these times, the fact that they observed the same hours for prayer gave them a sense of solidarity with the whole church.

The fourth century was a time when monasticism and ascetic tendencies flourished among Christians. Large groups of men and women would retreat from the world in order to devote themselves to prayer and solitude. Many of these ascetics gathered together in communities, in which they devoted themselves to both private and corporate prayer. McGowan writes, “These desert ‘fathers’—and ‘mothers’—seem to have offered two sets of daily prayers, early morning and late afternoon, which consisted largely of psalms.”<sup>14</sup> Another pattern, observed more rarely, was for the ascetics to come together at each hour of the day to pray the Psalms.<sup>15</sup>

While ascetics were gathering in monasteries outside the city, fourth century Christians who lived in the city were able to gather together like never before in churches and basilicas. This situation was brought on by the official recognition and sanction of Christianity under the Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337). Eusebius of Caesarea, a bishop and historian, gladly recorded that in this new situation, Christians gathered together in the early morning and in the evening for singing hymns and for prayer.<sup>16</sup> A fourth century collection of works entitled the *Apostolic Constitutions* instructs the bishop to encourage believers “to come constantly to church morning and evening every day, and by no means to forsake it on any account, but to assemble together continually.”<sup>17</sup> At these bidaily gatherings the Christians sang psalms together and

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<sup>13</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 198.

<sup>14</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 204.

<sup>15</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 205.

<sup>16</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 208.

<sup>17</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 209.

prayed. Psalm 63 was used in the morning and Psalm 141 in the evening.<sup>18</sup> McGowan writes, “the new emphasis on morning and evening communal prayers became a fundamental rhythm for many Christians.”<sup>19</sup> L. Edward Phillips also writes about the emergence of communal, daily prayer as a common practice in certain cities. He remarks, “By the fourth century, some cathedrals will conduct services of daily prayer morning and evening. These cathedral offices had a more-or-less fixed psalmody and communal intercessory prayer, and seem to have been popular among the laity and truly public events.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, by the fourth century, at least in certain cities, corporate prayer was an important daily practice for many Christians.

McGowan finds a common denominator in the content of prayer for these early Christians when they came together: “the centrality of the Lord’s Prayer and the Psalter are the most consistent and distinctive elements of ancient Christian practice.”<sup>21</sup> Phillips finds a special emphasis on the Lord’s Prayer. He writes, “Origin, Tertullian, and Cyprian all discuss the times of prayer in treatises that include expositions of the Lord’s Prayer.”<sup>22</sup> For instance, Phillips quotes Cyprian, who remarks that the word “our,” which commences the Lord’s Prayer, indicates that “our prayer is public and common; and when we pray, we pray not for one, but for the whole people.”<sup>23</sup> If the use of the Lord’s Prayer was central for corporate prayer, the use of the Psalter was not far from center. Kimberly Bracken Long writes, “Since the earliest days of the church, Christians have

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<sup>18</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 209.

<sup>19</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 212.

<sup>20</sup> L. Edward Phillips, “Early Christian Prayer,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Ritual*, ed. Risto Uro et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 583.

<sup>21</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 214.

<sup>22</sup> Phillips, “Early Christian Prayer,” 583.

<sup>23</sup> Phillips, “Early Christian Prayer,” 583. Phillips quotes Cyprian’s words from *De dominica oratione* 8.

sung psalms as part of worship on the Lord's Day."<sup>24</sup> Thus, in the first few centuries, when Christians came together to pray corporately, they most often used the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms as the basis for such prayer.

### **Corporate Prayer in the Lutheran Tradition**

The Reformation of the sixteenth century was, at its heart, a reformation of Christian doctrine. What does this have to do with corporate prayer? An ancient Christian maxim states *lex orandi, lex credendi* ("the law of what is prayed [is] the law of what is believed"). There is an inextricable and reciprocal relationship between the prayer/worship of the church and its doctrine. Thus, a reform of corporate worship and prayer was inevitable in the wake of a reformation of doctrine. Yet Martin Luther believed that it was not wise to change much, if anything, in the historic liturgy, but only those parts that contradicted the gospel and the teaching of Scripture. He believed the preaching and teaching of the word was the most important element of the service. Luther also promoted the use of German in public worship instead of Latin, which most laypeople did not understand. Thus, at the Wittenberg church that Luther served, they made the switch from Latin to German as well as a few other changes in the historic liturgy. Naturally, many of Luther's followers wanted to enact similar changes in their own congregations. So, upon request, Luther published *The German Mass and Order of Service* in 1526. We now turn to this work in order to examine clear elements of corporate prayer as found in the Wittenberg church's liturgy.

On Sundays, the Wittenberg church held three services with three different sermons. Regarding the first service, Luther writes:

At five or six o'clock in the morning a few Psalms are chanted for Matins. A sermon follows on the Epistle of the day, chiefly for the sake of the servants so that

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<sup>24</sup> Kimberly Bracken Long, "The Psalms in Christian Worship," in *The Oxford Handbook of The Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 545.

they too may be cared for and hear God's Word, since they cannot be present at other sermons. After this an antiphon and the *Te Deum* or the Benedictus, alternately, with an Our Father, collects, and *Benedicamus Domino*.<sup>25</sup>

Luther mentions several elements of corporate prayer that are worth noting. The first is that those who gather for Matins (morning prayer) chant the Psalms together. This is in continuity with ancient practice, as we have seen above. The antiphon is a responsive prayer that was likely set to music. The *Te Deum* is an ancient hymn that combined a confession of faith, a song of praise, and a prayer for help.<sup>26</sup> The Benedictus is a canticle based on Zechariah's prophecy from Luke 1:68-79. The morning prayer service closes with "an Our Father, collects, and *Benedicamus Domino*." The Lord's Prayer (commonly called the "Our Father") was an essential element of this morning prayer service. Collects are brief prayers appointed for each Sunday or festival of the liturgical calendar.<sup>27</sup> I will write more about collects below. The Latin phrase at the end of Luther's quotation, *Benedicamus Domino*, means, "Let us bless the Lord," and entails a brief responsive blessing with a closing benediction. This brief morning service includes several elements of corporate prayer, some of them were sung while others were spoken responsively. In continuity with the church of the first few centuries, this morning prayer service included the Psalms and the Lord's Prayer.

The Vespers (evening/late afternoon) service in Wittenberg contains a similar, yet distinct, assortment of Scripture readings, psalms, hymns, collects, and, of course, the Lord's Prayer.<sup>28</sup>

Now I will highlight some elements of the middle Sunday service of the mass, which was the most thorough and complete worship service, including communion. The

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<sup>25</sup> Martin Luther, "The German Mass and Order of Service," in *Luther's Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 68.

<sup>26</sup> Ulrich S. Leupold, ed., introduction to "The *Te Deum*," in *Liturgy and Hymns*, 171.

<sup>27</sup> Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947), 278.

<sup>28</sup> Luther, "The German Mass and Order of Service," 68-69.

service opens with a hymn or a psalm that is set to music.<sup>29</sup> Then follows the Kyrie eleison, in which the congregation prayerfully sings a threefold request for Christ to have mercy. After this the priest prays the collect for the day. Then the priest chants or sings the epistle reading.<sup>30</sup> Then follows a hymn. Then comes the reading (chanting or singing) of the Gospel. After hearing the Gospel, the congregation sings the Apostles Creed. Then the priest preaches a sermon on the Gospel reading. After the sermon comes the Lord's Prayer and an admonition to the congregation as they prepare to receive communion.<sup>31</sup> It is noteworthy, at this part of the service, that Luther encourages the priest to pray an expanded version or paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer. Luther offers his own example, in which he expands upon each petition and adds his own interpretation and application. For instance, this is Luther's paraphrase of the second petition: "That his kingdom may come to us and expand; that all transgressors and they who are blinded and bound in the devil's kingdom be brought to know Jesus Christ his Son by faith, and that the number of Christians may be increased."<sup>32</sup> The paraphrase and expansion of each petition would certainly help the congregation understand what they are saying in each petition of the Lord's Prayer. After the Lord's Prayer and the admonition follow the Words of Institution of the Lord's Supper, which is followed by the partaking of the sacrament. After communion, the congregation sings the *Sanctus*, which is taken from Isaiah 6. Then there is a collect of thanksgiving followed by the benediction.<sup>33</sup>

Many of the elements just mentioned are expressions of corporate prayer. The service goes back and forth between God speaking to the congregation through his word and the congregation responding to him through prayer, song, and thanksgiving. A few

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<sup>29</sup> Luther, "The German Mass and Order of Service," 69.

<sup>30</sup> Luther, "The German Mass and Order of Service," 69-74.

<sup>31</sup> Luther, "The German Mass and Order of Service," 78.

<sup>32</sup> Luther, "The German Mass and Order of Service," 79.

<sup>33</sup> Luther, "The German Mass and Order of Service," 82-84.

components are worth mentioning again. The service includes a psalm and the Lord's Prayer, which has been the consistent practice of the church. The Kyrie eleison is a simple prayer based on the words of several suppliants in the Gospels, for instance the two blind men, who prayed for Christ to have mercy on them (Matt 20:30). In the *Sanctus*, the congregation joins with the angels in Isaiah's vision who proclaim three times that the Lord of hosts is holy (Isa 6:3). These are examples of Scriptural phrases and prayers that are set to music in the liturgy.

The collect is also worth elaborating upon. In Wittenberg the collect was prayed at each service on Sunday and also on the shorter weekday services.<sup>34</sup> According to liturgist Luther D. Reed, "The Collect is a brief but significant prayer which the church appoints . . . for each Sunday or festival . . . . It is usually related in thought to the Gospel or the Epistle for the Day, and its chief function is to prepare the mind for the liturgical lessons."<sup>35</sup> Reed estimates that the church began to use and pray the collects beginning in the fourth century.<sup>36</sup> He helpfully explains the basic structure of most collects: (1) An invocation, (2) a basis for the petition, (3) the petition, (4) the purpose or benefit desired, (5) the ending, which is in effect a doxology.<sup>37</sup> This is the basic structure but Reed says that the second and fourth components are frequently missing from collects.

There are collects for each Sunday and festival of the church calendar. There are also many special collects for various occasions, such as the ordination of a pastor or to give thanks at the time of harvest. Collections of collects can be found in most Lutheran hymnals and in the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. I will offer here two examples of collects. First, the collect for the first Sunday in Advent: "Stir up, we

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<sup>34</sup> Luther, "The German Mass and Order of Service," 68-69.

<sup>35</sup> Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 278-79.

<sup>36</sup> Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 279-80.

<sup>37</sup> Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 281.

implore you, your power, O Lord, and come that by your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and be saved by your mighty deliverance; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.”<sup>38</sup> Second, here is the collect for Easter Day:

Almighty God the Father, through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ you have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord’s resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.<sup>39</sup>

As mentioned above, the collects are helpful to use during public worship because their content harmonizes with one or more of the Scripture readings assigned for that day in the church calendar. They may also be good resources for special prayer meetings, especially if the prayer leader would like everyone to pray a collect that coincides with a certain season of the church year, such as Advent or Lent. Or, perhaps a special collect could be prayed because of a special occasion in the life of the congregation, like a wedding or the birth of a child.

After the time of Luther, the Lutheran liturgy continued to develop and even diverge depending upon geography and other influences. In America, there are significant differences between the liturgies of Lutheran congregations that come from a Scandinavian background (like SLC) versus those that come from a German background. This paper is not the place to discuss these differences or to glean all the possible fruit from these liturgies that would help us understand how the Lutheran church has prayed corporately. Instead I will limit myself to one final component that was not present, as far as I can tell, during the time of Luther. At some point, the Lutheran liturgy came to include a component called “The Prayer of the Church,” also known as “The General Prayer.” Reed places this component after the sermon and before communion, and views

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<sup>38</sup> *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1982), 10.

<sup>39</sup> *Lutheran Worship*, 47.

the Prayer of the Church as one part of a unit with the offering of gifts and the offertory sentences.<sup>40</sup> Reed says that this prayer “is the liturgical counterpart of the offering of alms and oblations.”<sup>41</sup> The Prayer of the Church covers a lot of ground. It is a prayer for the well-being and salvation of the whole world. Reed remarks that, more so than any other component of the liturgy, this prayer “illustrates the congregation’s active exercise of its function as a priesthood of all believers.”<sup>42</sup> He also states that this prayer finds scriptural inspiration from Paul’s instructions for public prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

I will now give a brief sketch of the topics covered in the Prayer of the Church: praise and thanksgiving for the saving gifts of God; prayer for the universal church and for officers/leaders in the church; for people to come to faith and for Christ to raise up servants to preach the gospel; for the strength of young congregations; for our nation and our nation’s leaders; for sanctification of Christians; for schools and universities; for our homes, families, and children; for those in sorrow, need, sickness, adversity, or suffering persecution; for the land to produce plentifully; for those with difficult or dangerous vocations; thanksgiving for those who have died in Christ; prayer that we would remain in the true faith and finally enter the heavenly kingdom.<sup>43</sup> Reed includes a practical instruction for the minister that he may omit particular sections of this prayer at his own discretion. There is also a designated part of this prayer for the special intercessions and thanksgivings of those present during the worship service.

### **Conclusion of the Brief Historical Survey**

This survey has focused on the corporate prayer habits of the church in its earliest centuries and then again on corporate prayer as manifested in the liturgy of the

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<sup>40</sup> Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 315.

<sup>41</sup> Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 315.

<sup>42</sup> Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 315.

<sup>43</sup> Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 313-14.

Lutheran tradition. The use of the Lord's Prayer has been a consistent theme throughout the sources. The use of the Psalms has likewise been consistent. The Lutheran liturgy allows the congregation to enter into a conversation with God, hearing his Word read and preached, and then responding to him with prayers, hymns, and thanksgivings. Beyond the use of the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms, the Lutheran liturgy includes other helpful elements for corporate prayer, like the collect and the Prayer of the Church.

### **Survey of Various Methods for Praying Corporately**

This section examines various ways or methods that Christian leaders have put forward for facilitating corporate prayer, whether during the Sunday morning worship service or for use at special prayer meetings. After weighing the strengths and weaknesses of each method I will describe which method or combination of methods will work best for use at SLC for achieving the purpose of this ministry project.

#### **John Franklin: *How to Lead a Powerful Prayer Meeting***

John Franklin wrote a book entitled, *And the Place Was Shaken: How to Lead a Powerful Prayer Meeting*. As the title suggests, Franklin teaches Christian leaders how to lead corporate prayer meetings. I do not agree with everything he writes. For instance, he believes that prayer leaders should begin planning prayer meetings by discerning the activity of God.<sup>44</sup> This discernment involves more than just understanding God's will from Scripture and knowing the basic needs of the congregation. Some of his advice on this topic seems too subjective and mystical.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, Franklin still has much experience and gives sound overall advice on leading prayer meetings. The most helpful contribution of his book is where he outlines how to design, what he calls, a God-

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<sup>44</sup> John Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken: How to Lead a Powerful Prayer Meeting* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 54.

<sup>45</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 148-70.

centered format for prayer meetings. He offers a format or template for a prayer meeting that will keep people focused on God and his kingdom purposes. He wisely writes, “If you spend most of your time reviewing a prayer list or taking needs from the group, most likely the people will be needs-focused. If you spend most of the time bearing witness to God’s activity, his mission, his purposes, his character, his promises, and his answers, then most likely your people will be God-centered.”<sup>46</sup> To help achieve this God-centeredness, Franklin gives a sample template for a one-hour prayer meeting. I will now examine his template as a viable method for corporate prayer meetings.

Franklin’s one-hour format is divided into five sections: (1) focus on God, (2) respond from the heart, (3) seek first the kingdom, (4) present your requests, and (5) close in celebration.<sup>47</sup> I will briefly explain what Franklin suggests for each section.

Franklin recommends spending ten to fifteen minutes on the first section, “focus on God.” The chief purpose of this section is “to help hearts get oriented to and prepared for meeting God.”<sup>48</sup> He writes, “Begin with a time of music, Scripture, or testimony so that people focus on God. Pray ahead of time and ask God what aspect(s) about himself he wants you to highlight.”<sup>49</sup> Although I would not likely ask God to tell me what aspect about himself he wants me to highlight, I would follow Franklin’s other advice for this section. Before praying to God, it is good to hear from God himself in his word. It is also appropriate to begin with music so that the hymns or songs, which are often prayers themselves, might warm the hearts of those gathered for prayer.

The second section is called, “respond from the heart.” Franklin suggests spending ten minutes for this section. The primary purpose is “to let the heart of God’s

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<sup>46</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 58.

<sup>47</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 60.

<sup>48</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 61.

<sup>49</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 61.

people respond to him.”<sup>50</sup> Since the previous section highlighted God, his attributes, and his word, this section allows people to respond to him. Franklin writes, “They can do this in any number of ways, including silent prayer, group prayer, and signing, but you are creating the time for the Holy Spirit’s work in the hearts of his people.”<sup>51</sup> This is an ideal time for people to confess their sins and/or to give thanks to God.

The next section is called, “seek first the kingdom,” and Franklin suggests taking twenty to twenty-five minutes for this component, which is the longest of the five sections. He points to the structure of the Lord’s Prayer, in which “Jesus taught us to pray for the kingdom before we asked for our daily bread.”<sup>52</sup> The primary purpose of this section is “to help the people of God be on God’s agenda.”<sup>53</sup> Here is where people pray for the kingdom purposes of God to be realized. As examples, Franklin suggests praying for “the lost, missions, koinonia among believers, the upcoming VBS, and ministry to the homeless.”<sup>54</sup> Although Franklin did not specifically suggest this, this section would be an ideal time for praying through and expanding upon the first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer.

The fourth section is entitled, “present your requests,” and should last ten to fifteen minutes. This is a time of intercession for one another. Franklin writes, “you will lift up the sick, the hurting, and personal requests.”<sup>55</sup> He also suggests some creative ways and activities to involve all the people and encourage them to minister to one another. If the group is large, this is an ideal time to break up into small groups or pairs. This is the time, perhaps, to lay hands upon someone who is sick or burdened in some

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<sup>50</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 61.

<sup>51</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 61.

<sup>52</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 62.

<sup>53</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 62.

<sup>54</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 62.

<sup>55</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 62.

other way.<sup>56</sup> The primary purpose of this section is “to let people minister to one another by praying for one another.”<sup>57</sup>

The final section is called, “close in celebration,” and should last about five minutes. Franklin explains that this is time for God’s people to respond with thanksgiving or celebration.<sup>58</sup> The purpose here is “to let people affirm the blessing of having been in God’s presence.” Franklin writes that “often music will be a good way to do this.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, Franklin encourages opening and closing prayer meetings with worship music. This concludes the explanation of Franklin’s one-hour format for prayer meetings.

Franklin also includes a list of activities that are meant to involve everyone who gathers for the prayer meeting. I will list some of the activities: reading Scripture, singing, small groups, responsive reading, kneeling, coming to the altar, standing in pairs, writing a prayer card, walking while praying, giving testimony, holding hands, and laying on of hands.<sup>60</sup> These activities help people to stay engaged, to participate, and to keep moving. Using some of these activities during a prayer meeting certainly seems preferable to sitting, hunched over, on a folding chair for the entire hour.

Franklin has much experience leading prayer meetings and we are helped by listening to his guidance. His structure for a one-hour prayer meeting seems easy to reproduce or modify to suit the needs of any congregation. His approach should be commended especially for its focus on God and the matters of God’s kingdom.

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<sup>56</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 65.

<sup>57</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 62.

<sup>58</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 63.

<sup>59</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 63.

<sup>60</sup> Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 68.

## **Mark Dever: Corporate Prayer at Capitol Hill Baptist Church**

The next source I will examine is an interview with Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC. This interview is found in the *9Marks eJournal* from 2008 and is entitled “On the Use and Importance of Corporate Prayer: An Interview with Mark Dever.”<sup>61</sup> While the entire conversation is insightful, I will focus on Dever’s explanation of the various kinds of prayer that he and the other elders offer during their Sunday morning worship services. They offer the following kinds of prayer each Sunday: a prayer of praise, a prayer of confession, a prayer of intercession/pastoral prayer, and a prayer of thanks.<sup>62</sup> I will summarize Dever’s explanation of each kind of prayer. Although he is discussing corporate prayer during a Sunday morning worship service, these same kinds of prayers may also serve as the basis or format for prayer meetings.

First, Dever discusses the prayer of praise, which is focused on some aspect of God. He explains this prayer by distinguishing it from a prayer of thanksgiving, in which we thank God for something he has given to us. “A prayer of praise,” Dever explains, “is a prayer acknowledging an aspect of God’s character that’s been revealed to us. So we might praise him that he is a saving God; whereas we might thank him for his salvation of us.”<sup>63</sup> This is the time to focus on God’s character and attributes and to praise him for who he is.

Next, Dever discusses the prayer of confession. This is where the pastor confesses sins on behalf of and together with the congregation. When confessing sins, Dever will often say a confession that is relevant to the particular Scripture text that the

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<sup>61</sup> Mark Dever, “On the Use and Importance of Corporate Prayer: An Interview with Mark Dever,” *9Marks eJournal* 5, no. 1 (January-February 2008): 5-9, <https://www.9marks.org/article/use-and-importance-corporate-prayer/>.

<sup>62</sup> Dever, “On the Use and Importance of Corporate Prayer,” 6.

<sup>63</sup> Dever, “On the Use and Importance of Corporate Prayer,” 7.

church studies that morning. Dever says the purpose of this prayer is “to encourage self-examination and to help us meditate on God’s holiness and how that matches with the lives we’ve been leading. Then at the end, with the entire bill being totaled up, as it were, we ask for his forgiveness in the name of Christ.”<sup>64</sup> After this prayer, the pastor reads an assurance of pardon from Scripture.<sup>65</sup> This is meant to encourage the faith of God’s people to believe that God forgives those who repent for the sake of Christ.

The next kind of prayer Dever discusses is the pastoral prayer or the prayer of intercession. This is the time to pray for specific needs among those in the congregation and beyond. Dever says that he prays for things here that are likely on the mind of whole the congregation; for instance, a recent wedding, the birth of a child, or a pressing matter that the congregation is aware of.<sup>66</sup> He then prays for different classes of people, like the unemployed, those who desire to have children, and those in authority. He prays for issues that are currently at stake in our nation. He prays for the schools. He prays for those who have gone out from their congregation to preach the gospel, for missionaries, pastors, and seminary students. He prays for other churches in the area. He prays for several other countries and their leaders and for the spread of the gospel within them. He usually closes by praying for his own congregation, for some aspect of their sanctification, and the like.<sup>67</sup>

The same journal that contains this interview with Dever also includes a transcript of the prayers made during a public worship service at Capitol Hill Baptist Church. The pastoral prayer of intercession is longer than the other kinds of prayer, containing sixteen paragraphs. This prayer includes petitions for young parents in the

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<sup>64</sup> Dever, “On the Use and Importance of Corporate Prayer,” 7.

<sup>65</sup> Dever, “On the Use and Importance of Corporate Prayer,” 7.

<sup>66</sup> Dever, “On the Use and Importance of Corporate Prayer,” 7.

<sup>67</sup> Dever, “On the Use and Importance of Corporate Prayer,” 8.

congregation, for international brothers and sisters in the congregation, for state legislatures, for leaders in the District of Columbia, for the upcoming Christmas Eve service, for Sovereign Grace ministries, for a couple with a new child, for a brother serving in El Salvador, for the churches in Azerbaijan, Latvia, and Uganda, for the nation of Yemen, for the presidents of Sudan and of Afghanistan, and for the president of the United States and his wife.<sup>68</sup> Several of these matters are expanded upon with more specific requests. For example, the prayer for Yemen included a prayer for help because of the pervasive drug production and use in that country. The prayer for Uganda made mention of an Ebola outbreak that was happening. These petitions are informed by the particular needs of other countries, leaders, and individuals. We should consider the amount of time the elders must take to prepare these wide-ranging and well-informed prayers of intercession. This is a worthy model for intercessory, corporate prayer.

In the interview with Dever, he does not say anything about the prayer of thanksgiving other than what he said when distinguishing it from the prayer of praise. In the transcript of prayers in the same journal, the prayer of thanksgiving is brief and comes after the prayer of intercession. The prayer leader thanks God for his grace and kindness through his Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>69</sup>

The interview with Dever and the transcript of public prayers at Capitol Hill Baptist Church may be helpful to those wishing to lead corporate prayer in their own congregations. As I mentioned above, leaders may want to structure prayer meetings to consist of the four kinds of prayer used in this congregation: praise, confession, intercession, and thanksgiving. This division is similar to the kinds of prayer contained within the popular acronym, ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and

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<sup>68</sup> Jonathan Leeman, ed., "Sample Corporate Prayers from December 2, 2007," *9Marks eJournal* 5, no. 1 (January-February 2008): 25-27, <https://www.9marks.org/article/sample-corporate-prayers-december-2-2007/>.

<sup>69</sup> Leeman, "Sample Corporate Prayers," 27.

Supplication), which many Christians use to guide their prayers. Using this acronym or praying through the different kinds of prayer included at Dever's church is a great way for Christians to pray together in an orderly fashion. Additionally, these different kinds of prayer are clearly taught and modeled in the Bible.

**Megan Hill: *Praying Together***

Megan Hill, a Presbyterian pastor's wife, editor, and regular contributor to *Christianity Today* and *The Gospel Coalition*, has written a helpful book entitled, *Praying Together: The Priority and Privilege of Prayer in Our Homes, Communities, and Churches*. For a small book, Hill covers a wide range of topics related to prayer. For our purposes, chapter 8 is worthy of consideration, where she expounds upon "Praying with Partners and Groups."<sup>70</sup> Hill describes three different approaches to praying together: "choosing a single topic, praying systematically through items on a list, or taking requests from every person."<sup>71</sup> She adds that these three approaches are not mutually exclusive and that two or more of them can be followed in the same prayer meeting.

Hill believes there can be great profit in choosing a single topic, a single focus for praying together. She writes, "This allows us to develop that topic more fully in prayer and to together invest our hearts more deeply in the cause."<sup>72</sup> Naturally, she encourages those who follow this approach to choose a topic that is grounded in God's will as revealed in Scripture. In addition, a topic should be chosen that is a central or shared concern among those who are gathered for prayer. Hill gives several examples of worthy topics to focus on: "churches to be planted in a specific place, a particular person to come to Christ and be saved, a sick Christian brother or sister to be healed, certain

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<sup>70</sup> Megan Hill, *Praying Together: The Priority and Privilege of Prayer in Our Homes, Communities, and Churches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 105-13.

<sup>71</sup> Hill, *Praying Together*, 109.

<sup>72</sup> Hill, *Praying Together*, 109.

pervasive sins in our community to be confessed and forsaken, or our persecuted brothers and sisters to be vindicated.”<sup>73</sup> This is a wise approach to follow when particular needs come up or when particular goals arise in the life and mission of the congregation.

Next, Hill describes how to pray corporately through items on a list. This method is advantageous because it allows the group to pray “for the whole number of gospel opportunities, churches, and individuals.”<sup>74</sup> As examples, Hill suggests that the group may pray for “members of our local church; residents, employees, students, or volunteers in the places we live or work; churches in our community or in our denomination; civil authorities over our city, country, state, and nation; missionaries supported by our local church; nations of the world and the church in those nations.”<sup>75</sup> The items suggested here reveal that this method of prayer is similar to the intercessory prayer discussed by Dever above. One advantage to this method is that it allows the group to cover a wide range of people, institutions, and other matters in prayer. One disadvantage is that, if this is the only method used, the prayers may lack the kingdom focus or God-centeredness that we find, for instance, in the first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer.

The third and final approach mentioned by Hill is when a group takes personal requests from those who are gathered for prayer. This approach helps the group to bear one another’s burdens and to rejoice in one another’s blessings; in short, it encourages the fruit of mutual love.<sup>76</sup> Hill mentions several examples when the Apostle Paul included personal prayer requests in his letters (Col 4:3; 1 Thess 3:10; 2 Thess 3:1; and Phlm 22).<sup>77</sup> She acknowledges that this approach to group prayer can go astray. Requests can

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<sup>73</sup> Hill, *Praying Together*, 109.

<sup>74</sup> Hill, *Praying Together*, 109.

<sup>75</sup> Hill, *Praying Together*, 110.

<sup>76</sup> Hill, *Praying Together*, 110.

<sup>77</sup> Hill, *Praying Together*, 110.

become gossip. They can become occasions for unnecessary complaining. Some requests may be too vague while others contain far too many details.<sup>78</sup> Hill encourages participants to consider the following questions before sharing a request:

Is this request something I could expect God to grant? Do I have biblical reason to think my desire is according to God's revealed will? Can I ask other people to add their "Amen" to this request? Is this request appropriate for everyone present to know? Do I expose someone else's private sins or concerns by sharing this request? Will this request encourage genuine love for God and for neighbor?<sup>79</sup>

These are good guidelines for sharing requests. Hill adds that group members should always be patient and gracious when someone shares an immature or imperfect prayer request.<sup>80</sup>

Hill has described three common ways that many Christians pray together. She did not invent a novel approach. Instead, she offers sound advice to serve Christians who want to pray together well. I think the first approach, praying together for a specific focus, would greatly benefit congregations when a particular need or goal is at hand. A good prayer leader could match that single focus with a Bible passage germane to the topic and use it for devotions before the time of prayer, or even as the basis for corporate prayer.

### **Donald Whitney: *Praying the Bible***

Donald S. Whitney is certainly not the first to suggest that Christians should use the Bible as a prayer book. Whitney opens most chapters of his book, *Praying the Bible*, with quotations from others who advocate the very same thing, namely, turning the words of Scripture into prayer. For instance, at the beginning of chapter 4 he quotes John Piper, who said, "Open the Bible, start reading it, and pause at every verse and turn it into

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<sup>78</sup> Hill, *Praying Together*, 110.

<sup>79</sup> Hill, *Praying Together*, 111.

<sup>80</sup> Hill, *Praying Together*, 111.

a prayer.”<sup>81</sup> Neither did Piper invent this method, for it is an ancient practice. Though Whitney is not the first to promote praying the Bible, he should be commended for his clear explanation of this method and for the many helpful examples that he offers. I will now summarize Whitney’s method for praying Scripture.

Whitney begins by identifying a common problem that inhibits many Christians from a consistent and meaningful prayer life. The problem is that when people pray, “they tend to say the same old things about the same old things.”<sup>82</sup> When this generally marks our prayer life, Whitney argues, it becomes boring. And when prayer becomes boring, we don’t feel like praying.<sup>83</sup> Whitney’s solution to this problem of saying the same old things again and again is to use the words of Scripture to shape and form our own prayers. Whitney puts it simply: “When you pray, pray through a passage of Scripture, particularly a psalm.”<sup>84</sup> Although Whitney encourages Christians to pray everything in the Bible, he particularly emphasizes praying the Psalms.

In chapter 3, Whitney further explains and models his method by praying through a portion of Psalm 23. He reads a phrase, not even a whole verse, and then pauses to pray words that come to his mind based upon that phrase. I will quote Whitney’s prayer based on the first phrase, “The Lord is my shepherd”:

Lord, I thank you that you *are* my shepherd. You’re a good shepherd. You have shepherded me all my life. And, great Shepherd, please shepherd my family today: guard them from the ways of the world; guide them into the ways of God. Lead them not into temptation; deliver them from evil. O great Shepherd, I pray for my children; cause them to be your sheep. May they love you as their shepherd, as I do. And Lord, please shepherd me in the decision that’s before me about my future. Do I make that move, that change, or not? I also pray for our under-shepherds at the church. Please shepherd them as they shepherd us.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 33.

<sup>82</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 11.

<sup>83</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 20.

<sup>84</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 27.

<sup>85</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 29-30.

After this prayer, Whitney moves on to the next phrase of Psalm 23. He explains that Christians can keep praying about anything that comes to mind before moving on to the next phrase. When they run out of things to say, they should move on to the next phrase, “I shall not want,” and pray whatever comes to mind based on it.<sup>86</sup> Christians should continue to pray in this manner until they run out of time or run out of psalm. If they run out of psalm before running out of time, they should continue praying the next psalm. Whitney says the best thing about this method is that Christians will “never again say the same old things about the same old things.”<sup>87</sup> This is because the words of the psalm greatly influence the words of their prayers.

We should notice from Whitney’s example prayer, quoted above, that he prays for things that most Christians would likely pray about even if they were not praying through a psalm, namely, for his family and for guidance about an upcoming decision. Whitney argues that, without praying through Scripture, a Christian would pray about his family and future decision using the same, repetitious words as usual. Yet, by praying through Psalm 23, Whitney uses the distinct phrase, “The Lord is my shepherd,” as a guide for praying for his family and for guidance about his decision. Whitney is encouraging Christians to bring all of their concerns, whatever might be on their minds, to God in prayer and to use the words of Scripture as the basis and guide for praying about all those things.

Certainly, Whitney is teaching Christians to allow the words of Scripture to influence our prayers so that we pray about the matters contained in the Bible passage. However, he does not limit Christians to only praying about things that are directly in line with the intended meaning of the biblical author. Whitney writes, “you simply go through the passage line by line, talking to God about whatever comes to mind as you read the

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<sup>86</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 30.

<sup>87</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 32.

text.”<sup>88</sup> He really means, “whatever comes to mind.” In fact, he says that we should pray whatever comes to our minds “even if what comes to mind has nothing to do with the text.”<sup>89</sup>

Whitney realizes that this point may be controversial. He spends a few pages explaining how he is not talking about interpreting or teaching the Bible but praying the Bible.<sup>90</sup> He does not advocate teaching the Bible in a “whatever comes to mind” fashion, but to pray “whatever comes to mind,” while reading the Bible. As I consider using Whitney’s method for prayer meetings at SLC, I believe that encouraging people to pray whatever comes to their minds based on the words of Scripture will embolden people to pray out loud. I led a prayer meeting once in which we prayed through a passage of Scripture together. I explained and then modeled how to do this for them. The content of my prayer reflected a sound interpretation and application of the biblical passage. I encouraged others to do the same sort of thing. The only other people who dared to pray aloud during the meeting were the most biblically literate. Those who were not confident at interpreting the Bible remained silent, perhaps because they feared their own prayers would not be in harmony with a proper interpretation of the text. Had I encouraged them to pray whatever came to mind based on the passage, regardless of whether it reflected the text’s original meaning, I believe that more of them would have participated. While Whitney acknowledges that many people’s prayers will stray far from the actual meaning of the text, he argues that “in the long run their prayers will be far more biblical than if they just make up their own prayers.”<sup>91</sup> Using the Bible as a guide for prayer will “help

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<sup>88</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 33.

<sup>89</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 33.

<sup>90</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 34-36.

<sup>91</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 37.

the people of God pray increasingly according to the will of God.”<sup>92</sup> He is absolutely right.

Whitney acknowledges that some verses are hard to understand. He gives Christians the freedom to skip obscure verses and go on to the next one. Sometimes a verse will be easy to understand but does not prompt any thoughts for prayer. In that case, too, Whitney says to go on to the next verse.<sup>93</sup> Whitney has wise counsel for how and whether to pray through imprecatory psalms, which I will not take time to reproduce here.<sup>94</sup> Although he focuses on praying through the Psalms, he devotes chapter 6 to “Praying Other Parts of the Bible.”<sup>95</sup> For instance, one may read Romans 8:1 and pray, “Thank you, Lord, that I am free from condemnation because of Christ Jesus.”<sup>96</sup> Whitney gives another example of coming across Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians 2:2 about suffering and being shamefully treated for preaching the gospel. Whitney suggests this may prompt us to pray about the suffering in our own lives, the suffering of people in our congregation and community, and finally, about Christians throughout the world who are persecuted for their faith in Christ.<sup>97</sup> Whitney has good advice for praying through narrative sections of Scripture. Instead of pausing to pray after each phrase, he advocates reading the entire narrative in order to get the big picture and to pause for prayer only after reading the whole story.<sup>98</sup> This shows that his method is adaptable to the different genres found in Scripture.

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<sup>92</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 37.

<sup>93</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 38-39.

<sup>94</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 39-40.

<sup>95</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 55-61.

<sup>96</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 56.

<sup>97</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 57.

<sup>98</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 60.

The last thing I will cover from Whitney's book is "Appendix 2: Praying the Bible with a Group."<sup>99</sup> His first bit of counsel is that before asking the group to pray through a passage of Scripture corporately, each member should be given a chance to experience praying through a Bible passage individually. This is because, in Whitney's words, "Once they have an idea of what it's like to pray through a section of Scripture on their own, it's a lot easier for them to do so with others."<sup>100</sup> He then explains three different ways a group of people can pray through Scripture together. He offers, what he calls, a good way, a better way, and the best way.<sup>101</sup> I will only summarize the best way. The leader must curate the psalm or other passage of Scripture beforehand and select verses that are likely to be easily understood by the group and most conducive for prayer. The leader should leave out verses that may be too obscure or difficult for members to turn into prayer. To facilitate the prayer meeting, the leader should read the passage out loud, one carefully-selected-verse at a time, pausing after each verse to allow the members to pray whatever comes to their minds.<sup>102</sup> He gives an example of praying through Psalm 37 as a group, reading some verses out loud and skipping verses such as Psalm 37:35, "I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree."<sup>103</sup> This verse, understandably, would be hard for most Christians to turn into a spoken prayer during a prayer meeting.

Whitney also suggests how the prayer requests of members may be incorporated into this method. People should certainly share their requests for prayer. But rather than pausing to pray through each request immediately, those requests should be held in mind (or perhaps written down) as the group begins to pray through a passage of

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<sup>99</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 93-96.

<sup>100</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 93.

<sup>101</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 94-95.

<sup>102</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 95.

<sup>103</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 95.

Scripture. Then people will pray for the various requests as they pray through the Bible passage. The phrases of Scripture will shape and guide the content of their prayers made for the people and the matters that have been requested.

In closing, Whitney describes the benefit of using this method for corporate prayer meetings:

Not only do the prayers tend to be more scripturally sound, but also it seems that more people participate when a group prays through a passage of Scripture, as each successive verse sparks new things for people to pray. In addition, those who pray tend to use fewer filler words and also to pray more specifically for the request. Instead of the generic “Please bless this” and “Be with them” prayers, people pray things the Bible commands about particular people and situations.

Overall, I think Whitney’s method of praying the Bible will be a very beneficial method to use for prayer meetings at SLC.

### **Martin Luther: *A Simple Way to Pray***

Luther was once asked by his barber for some practical guidance on how to prepare oneself for prayer. Luther published his letter to Peter Beskendorf, the Master Barber, in 1535 so that others might benefit from his instruction. His entire letter is less than thirty pages long and is written in a very clear and accessible manner. In *A Simple Way to Pray*, Luther explains and briefly models how to use the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles Creed as a basis for prayer. These three components constitute what Luther and others since ancient times regarded as the catechism. Luther’s method for praying through the catechism is similar, though not identical, to Whitney’s method of praying through Scripture.

Luther instructs his barber to pray the Lord’s Prayer completely, word for word, and then to go back through each of the seven petitions in order to pray more expansively about things related to each petition.<sup>104</sup> As a model, Luther gives an example

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<sup>104</sup> Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray for Peter, the Master Barber*, trans. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2012), 9-13. Note of clarification: Most New Testament scholars

of what he often prays under each petition. In order to be able to pray through the Lord's Prayer like this, people need to be catechized in the basic meaning of each petition. Luther offers this instruction in his Small and Large Catechisms, but he covers much of the same content in this brief letter to his barber.

I will reproduce here Luther's paraphrase and expansion of the sixth petition, because it is the shortest. Luther writes:

Pray: "And lead us not into temptation," and then say something like this: "O dear Lord God and Father, keep us upright and alert, passionate and diligent in Your Word and service, so that we do not become secure, lazy, and sluggish. Keep us from thinking that we are secure, have everything under control, and need nothing more, so that the raging devil cannot overtake us by surprising us suddenly and snatching us from Your dear Word. Prevent him from creating divisions and sects among us, or leading us into sin and shame, both bodily and spiritually. Instead, through Your Spirit, give us wisdom and power, so that we can oppose him like knights in armor and maintain the victory. Amen"<sup>105</sup>

Luther's paraphrase of the sixth petition is reminiscent of Paul's admonition to the Corinthians, "Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12).

Those who read Luther's paraphrases of each petition may find his frequent allusions to the Pope and to his other enemies as a distraction. For instance, when expanding upon the first petition, "Hallowed be thy name," Luther includes these remarks: "Destroy and root out the horrible idolatry and heresy of the Turks, the Pope, and all false teachers and sectarian spirits, who act falsely under Your name and so terribly misuse it and blaspheme it."<sup>106</sup> Christians today may wish to substitute more contemporary enemies of the gospel or they may wish to avoid Luther's polemical language altogether. Luther counsels his barber, "You need to know that I am not saying you should literally say all these words when you pray."<sup>107</sup> Instead, Luther gives an

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today divide the Lord's Prayer into six petitions, but Luther, following tradition, finds seven. The difference is whether one regards Matt 6:13 as containing one or two petitions.

<sup>105</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 11-12.

<sup>106</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 8.

<sup>107</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 12.

example of the kinds of things he prays for when praying the Lord's Prayer. He adds, "When the heart is warmed and ready to pray, these are the kinds of thoughts that will fill it, sometimes with many more words, or with fewer words."<sup>108</sup>

After giving his model for praying through the Lord's Prayer, he moves on to the Ten Commandments. To assist his prayer, Luther says that he makes "a wreath of four strands out of each commandment."<sup>109</sup> That is, he finds four things to pray about regarding each commandment. Said another way, he looks at the commandment from four different angles. First, instruction. He considers what God is teaching and commanding in the commandment. Second, thanksgiving. He uses the commandment to thank God for something. Third, confession. He confesses his sin against the commandment. Fourth, prayer. He makes a petition based on the words of the commandment.<sup>110</sup>

I will now quote Luther's words as he prays about these four things from the second commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain."<sup>111</sup> Regarding how this commandment gives instruction, Luther writes,

First, I learn that I should regard God's name as glorious, holy, and beautiful and use His name neither to swear, curse, lie, nor be conceited, nor seek my own honor or name, but rather humbly call upon His name, pray, praise, and glorify, and let this name be my honor and boast that He is my God, and I am His poor creature and unworthy servant.

Regarding how the commandment leads to thanksgiving, he writes, "Second, I thank Him for the glorious gifts that He has given me by revealing and giving me His name, that I can boast that in His name I am called God's servant and creature, etc., and that His name is my refuge like a mighty fortress to which the righteous flee and are protected, as

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<sup>108</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 13.

<sup>109</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 16.

<sup>110</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 16.

<sup>111</sup> Lutherans and Catholics number the Ten Commandments differently than those in the Reformed tradition.

Solomon says in Proverbs 18:10.”<sup>112</sup> Regarding how the commandment leads to confession, Luther says,

Third, I confess and admit my terrible and onerous sins against this commandment through my whole life long, for all those times when I have not called upon His name, have not praised His name, and have dishonored it. I have been unthankful for the gift of His name, and have even used His name for all sorts of shameful sins, such as swearing, lying, betraying, etc. I am grieved by this and plead for grace and forgiveness, etc.<sup>113</sup>

Finally, regarding how this commandment leads to a specific petition, Luther writes, “Fourth, I pray for help and strength, from this point forward, to learn this commandment well and guard myself against such shameful unthankfulness, and sinful misuse of His name, but rather that I will be found thankful and truly fear and honor His name.”<sup>114</sup>

Luther’s method is fairly simple once learned. His approach of finding four strands in each commandment may also be applied to other Bible passages, not just the commandments. In fact, while teaching people how to pray through the Bible, it would be helpful to teach them to consider the text from the four different angles suggested by Luther.

As Luther concludes his section on the Ten Commandments, he writes pastorally to his barber, “From this a heart will come to its senses and warm to prayer. But watch out that you do not bite off everything, or too much, right away and thus make the spirit weary . . . . It is sufficient if you work through one point or part of another so that you can kindle a flame in the heart.”<sup>115</sup> Luther does not bind us to his words nor does he want us to attempt too much in one sitting. He aims to give a pattern by which our hearts may be kindled and strengthened to pray.

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<sup>112</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 17.

<sup>113</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 17-18.

<sup>114</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 18.

<sup>115</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 27.

Luther then goes through the Apostles Creed, using the same fourfold structure for each article. Much in this section is devoted to thanking God for who he is and what he has done for us and to prayer for strong faith to believe what the creed teaches about God.<sup>116</sup> For instance, based on the last phrase of the Apostles Creed, he writes, “Pray for genuine strong faith that will endure and remain until you come to that place where it all will abide eternally, that is, after the resurrection of the dead in eternal life. Amen.”<sup>117</sup> While it is certainly possible to pray through the Apostles Creed, it does not seem as conducive to corporate prayer as praying through the Lord’s Prayer or the Ten Commandments.

One great advantage of the method in *A Simple Way to Pray* is that Luther assumes that many Christians will have the source material memorized. They should already know the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles Creed by heart. Therefore, they have a prayer book with them at all times. They still need to learn the basic instruction of the catechism as well as the wreath of four strands to make four kinds of prayers out of the commandments. This method would not be too difficult to teach in a group prayer meeting. It would be especially helpful if the leader provided a handout with pertinent information, such as a list of the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the wreath of four strands.

### **Conclusion of the Survey of Various Methods for Corporate Prayer**

This concludes the survey of various methods for corporate prayer. Each method above has much that commends it. The following section considers which method or combination of methods is likely to prove most beneficial for equipping the leaders of SLC to lead the congregation in prayer.

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<sup>116</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 28-30.

<sup>117</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 30.

### **Selecting a Method for Corporate Prayer at SLC**

Now is the time to select a method or combination of methods for corporate prayer at SLC. Each of the five authors evaluated in the previous section offer valuable counsel for corporate prayer. Yet for simplicity's sake, it would not be wise to combine all the positive elements from the five authors in order to form one composite method for corporate prayer. Instead, it seems best to combine the Bible-based approach of Donald Whitney with the guidance of Martin Luther on praying through the Lord's Prayer. That is, SLC will derive the most benefit from incorporating Bible-based, corporate prayer, as taught by Donald Whitney, as well as the method of praying through the Lord's Prayer as taught by Martin Luther. If we focus on the Psalms, using Whitney's method, and on the Lord's Prayer, using Luther's method, then SLC will conform to the practice of the ancient church, which, according to McGowan, consistently used the Lord's Prayer and the Psalter as the central components for its practice of corporate prayer.<sup>118</sup> See appendix 4 for the six-week curriculum which combines the methods of Whitney and Luther and was used for training the leaders of SLC to lead prayer meetings.

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<sup>118</sup> McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 214.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

#### **Preparation**

To prepare for this ministry project I conducted research and performed ministry tasks that were related to the subject matter of this project. I knew the purpose of my project was to prepare the leaders of SLC to lead Bible-based prayer meetings in our church, so I began to research what I felt was necessary to in order to accomplish this purpose. Chapter 2 of this project describes the exegetical research I completed. I studied several key passages from the New Testament that dealt with corporate prayer, namely, Luke 11:1-13, 1 Timothy 2:1-7, and James 5:13-18. My study of Luke 11 proved most beneficial because that portion of Scripture includes the Lord's Prayer, which ended up becoming the content of the first three lessons of my curriculum.

My research continued with chapter 3 of this project, in which I studied the history of corporate prayer in the early church and in the time of the Reformation and in which I also surveyed contemporary methods of leading prayer meetings. The historical survey showed that the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms were consistently utilized in the corporate prayers of the church. This was a helpful insight because I initially intended to create a curriculum to equip the participants to become leaders of Bible-based prayer. However, the insight I gleaned from this historical survey led me to narrow the focus of my curriculum to equip the participants to lead prayer meetings based on the Lord's Prayer and upon the Psalms. The second portion of chapter 3 was a survey of some contemporary methods of leading corporate prayer and prayer meetings. During research, I came across resources that proved invaluable for the creation of my own curriculum. A *Simple Way to Pray* by Martin Luther provides a model for using the Lord's Prayer as a

structure and springboard for further prayer.<sup>1</sup> Donald Whitney's *Praying the Bible* teaches how an individual or a group can pray through a psalm.<sup>2</sup> I implemented and curated much of what I learned from these two resources as I wrote my own curriculum.

Beyond my research for writing the initial chapters of this project, I also planned Bible studies and sermons that lined up with the subject matter of my curriculum. In the summer of 2021, I preached a three-sermon series on prayer that included two sermons on the Lord's Prayer. I also taught confirmation students about the Lord's Prayer from Luther's Small Catechism. In the winter of 2021-2022 I led a six-week Bible study on the Psalms in which we read through portions of a devotional book entitled *40 Days in the Psalms* by T. J. Betts.<sup>3</sup> Finally, I taught Senior High students about the Psalms at Pickerel Lake Lutheran Bible Camp in early June 2022. These preaching and teaching opportunities helped me as I prepared to write and teach my curriculum which was based on the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms.

In the first quarter of 2022 I wrote the six-session curriculum. The purpose of this curriculum was to equip the leaders of SLC to lead prayer meetings based on the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. The first three lessons focused on the Lord's Prayer and the last three focused on the Psalms. As I wrote each lesson, I continued to research the pertinent material. I studied several short works on the Lord's Prayer as I wrote the first three lessons. When I wrote the lessons on the Psalms, I relied heavily on *Praying the Bible*, by Whitney. When I finished writing the curriculum, my wife, a published author and illustrator, read through each lesson and gave me very helpful feedback. After implementing her feedback, I was ready to submit my curriculum to an expert panel for their review.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray for Peter, the Master Barber*, trans. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> T. J. Betts, *40 Days in the Psalms*, ed. William F. Cook III (Nashville: B&H, 2021).

### **Curriculum Review by Expert Panel**

In early April 2022, I submitted my curriculum to an expert panel for their review. I did this so that my curriculum would be as good as possible before I taught it to the leaders of SLC. This expert panel consisted of four people involved in full-time ministry. Dr. Nathan Olson is a professor at the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and he serves as a senior pastor. Rev. Kirk Thorson is the senior pastor of a Free Lutheran congregation in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and also serves as the president of the South Dakota district of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Rev. John Mochel is the senior pastor of Brooklyn Evangelical Free church in my own town of Beresford, South Dakota. He received his MDiv at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and has served in pastoral ministry for over twenty years. Finally, Michelle Olson (no relation to Dr. Nathan Olson) has a MA in theological studies, has served as a youth ministries director for ten years, and has held various roles in public and private education for over twenty years. I received very helpful feedback from these ministry leaders and my curriculum increased in quality because of them. Their combined evaluations showed that my curriculum met or exceeded the sufficient level. This assured me that my curriculum was ready for implementation.

### **Selecting Participants**

I will now describe how I chose the subjects to whom I taught the curriculum. I first envisioned that the subjects would be the deacons of SLC because they assist the pastor in caring for the spiritual condition of the church members. There were three deacons when I began writing this ministry project. But when the time drew nearer to implement my curriculum, there were only two. (No one died. It had to do with term limits.) When I told this to my advisor, he encouraged me to teach the curriculum to at least five people. Therefore, I asked the two deacons and their wives to participate in the curriculum. One of these women is a former deaconess and the other woman serves as the Sunday school superintendent. To add a fifth participant, I asked the chairman of our

congregation, a former deacon himself, to join the study. As a group, we decided to aim to meet on Wednesday evenings unless someone had a conflict, in which case we would meet on a Tuesday evening. Our first session together was on Tuesday, May 31, 2022, and our last session was on Tuesday, July 5.

### **Pre-Surveys**

Before teaching the curriculum to the leaders of SLC, I wanted to learn about their understanding of prayer and especially about their prayer habits. To glean this information, I gave them the Understanding and Practice of Prayer Survey (UPPS) in May 2022.<sup>4</sup> I created this survey during a course called Project Methodology during the summer of 2020. However, I edited the survey just prior to giving it to the leaders. In addition to asking participants about their understanding and practice of prayer, the survey also asks them about whether they feel confident to lead corporate prayer. It is a mixed method survey, utilizing multiple choice questions, a Likert scale, and open-ended questions in which participants are invited to respond in their own words. I gave each participant two copies of this survey. I instructed them to take one survey before the first lesson of the curriculum and to take the second survey when they finished the sixth and final lesson. This was to assess whether the curriculum brought about an improvement in their understanding and practice of prayer. See chapter 5 and appendix 1 for my analysis of these surveys.

### **Implementation**

I created binders for each leader that included the six-lesson curriculum that I wrote. The curriculum is thirty-two pages long and includes two appendices. I entitled it, *How to Lead Prayer Meetings with the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms*. Each lesson of the

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1.

curriculum is meant to be completed in one hour or less. This curriculum may be referenced in appendix 4.

### **Lesson 1: Praying the Lord's Prayer I**

We met for our first session on May 31, 2022, at SLC. All five participants were present, and they turned in their completed surveys before we began. Our first session commenced with prayer after which we read the introduction of the curriculum. The introduction explains the purpose of the curriculum as well as its basic structure. The purpose is to equip the participants to lead prayer meetings based on the petitions of the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. The first three lessons focus on the Lord's Prayer and the last three focus on the Psalms. The two appendices at the end of the curriculum serve as templates (or orders of service) for leading prayer meetings that the leaders can utilize when they are ready to lead prayer meetings.

After reading the introduction, we read through the first lesson. This lesson explains the meanings of the introduction and the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer and instructs how these elements may serve as a foundation and springboard for further prayer. For instance, after teaching the meaning of the first petition, "Hallowed be thy name," the curriculum offers the following as "springboards for further prayer":

1. Pray for all people to praise, honor, and magnify God's holy name (Ps 148:11-13).
2. Pray that we, as God's children, would lead holy lives as we represent God to the world.
3. Pray that God's word would spread abroad and be taught in its truth and purity.

The same pattern is followed for the second and third petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Instruction on each petition concludes with a "springboard for further prayer" section. Taken together, these "springboard for further prayer" sections are helpful lists for leading prayer meetings based on the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. The first lesson assigned homework for the leaders which consisted of praying through the Lord's Prayer

each day and expanding upon the first three petitions as they prayed, utilizing the “springboard for further prayer” sections as an aid. At the conclusion of our time together, we prayed through the first three petitions as well as the things listed in the “springboard for further prayer” sections. This first session lasted exactly one hour.

## **Lesson 2: The Lord’s Prayer II**

For our second session we met on Wednesday, June 8, with all five participants present. In this lesson we studied the last four petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. I began by asking them about their experience of praying the Lord’s Prayer each day and expanding upon the first three petitions. One participant mentioned that it was good because it was different from his normal prayer routine.

Lesson 2 teaches the meanings of the last four petitions and also suggests “springboards for further prayer” based on each petition. To teach the meaning of each petition, I reference pertinent Bible verses. I often cite Luther’s Small Catechism and sometimes other sources. For instance, while teaching the meaning of the fourth petition, “Give us this day our daily bread,” I quote from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones, who paraphrases the fourth petition like this: “Please give us everything we need today.”<sup>5</sup> In lesson 2, there are three separate places in which the group pauses for discussion. The sixth and seventh petitions of the Lord’s Prayer were taught together as a unit because they are so similar: “And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” At the conclusion of our session, we prayed through the last four petitions of the Lord’s Prayer as well as the items mentioned in the “springboard for further prayer” sections. As homework, the participants were encouraged to pray through the Lord’s Prayer each day and to expand upon each petition as time allowed, using the “springboard for further prayer” sections as a prayer aid.

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<sup>5</sup> Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, illus. Jago (Grand Rapids: Zonderkidz, 2007), 226.

### **Lesson 3: The Lord's Prayer III**

Due to scheduling conflicts, we could not all meet together for our third session. On Tuesday morning, June 14, I met with Phil and Linda at their home to go through the lesson together. On the evening of the same day, I met with the other three participants at SLC. This lesson is very different from the first two lessons. The first two lessons teach the meanings of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer while lesson 3 gives a step-by-step guide to leading a one-hour prayer meeting based on the Lord's Prayer. This lesson should be studied in conjunction with appendix A, at the back of the curriculum, which is a template (order of service) for a prayer meeting based on the Lord's Prayer.

The template, found in appendix A of the curriculum, begins with a call to prayer and a hymn. This is followed by instruction on the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer. The leader of the prayer meeting is encouraged to thoughtfully and judiciously choose material from the first two lessons of the curriculum in order to teach the meanings of the petitions to those who attend the prayer meeting. The leader is encouraged to produce learning aids (a handout or a digital presentation) to help people learn the material. After giving instruction, the leader of the prayer meeting should hand out a copy of "the expanded outline" to each person present at the prayer meeting. This "expanded outline" is found in appendix A of the curriculum. It includes the elements found in the "springboard for further prayer" sections of the first two lessons. It also includes other items under each petition that are appropriate for a congregational prayer meeting. The "expanded outline" will serve as a guide for everyone at the prayer meeting to help them pray through the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. After the time of corporate prayer, the template calls for the group to close with a hymn and by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Lesson 3 includes other helpful tips for leading prayer meetings, such as how to take prayer requests and weave them into the expanded outline and how to lead the group from one petition to the next without making the people feel rushed or anxious.

The lesson concludes with discussion questions about the prayer meeting template. This lesson also includes an important homework assignment. Using appendix A as a template, the leaders must create an order of service for a prayer meeting that could be used at SLC. They must select songs. They must plan how they would teach others about the Lord's Prayer and they must prepare learning-aids that would help the group. In short, for this assignment they must do everything necessary as if they were preparing to lead a prayer meeting based on the petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

#### **Lesson 4: Praying the Psalms I**

For our fourth session together we met on Sunday, June 26, one hour before the morning worship service began. One participant joined us via speaker phone because he was at home recovering from COVID-19. He still felt well enough to participate from home and was able to take part in discussion by asking questions and making comments. Prior to starting, the participants handed in their homework assignment from the previous week. As explained above, they had to create a template for leading a prayer meeting and produce learning-aids for teaching about the Lord's Prayer. They did an excellent job and, after reviewing their work (at a later time), I gave them constructive feedback.

Lesson 4 begins the second half of the six-week curriculum. Having taken three lessons to study the Lord's Prayer, now the participants will study the Psalms for three lessons with the goal of being equipped to lead prayer meetings based on a psalm. However, before learning to lead a group in corporate prayer through a psalm, the participants must learn how to pray individually through the Psalms. This is the focus of lessons 4 and 5. My primary source for teaching material in these lessons is a book entitled, *Praying the Bible*, by Donald S. Whitney, who teaches biblical spirituality at Southern Seminary.

In lesson 4, the curriculum teaches how to pray through a psalm. It teaches two simple methods called direct appropriation and indirect appropriation. Whitney does not

use these terms in his book, but he teaches the concepts behind them. Direct appropriation takes place when people pray the exact same words as found in the psalm or when they pray words that closely resemble the words and content of the psalm. Indirect appropriation takes place when people read a portion of a psalm and then use it as a springboard to pray more expansively about their own specific needs. In this method, the words of the psalm cause the person praying to think of something else and then they pray about that for a while before returning to the text of the psalm. In order to teach direct and indirect appropriation, I share examples of my own and I share examples from Whitney's book.

Lesson 4 also teaches how to include the things we normally pray about as we pray through a psalm. In addition, participants are taught how to move from the general statements found in the Psalms toward praying about specific matters in their own lives. This is part of indirect appropriation. Studying Whitney's example of praying through Psalm 23 was very helpful for teaching the leaders of SLC how to pray through a psalm.

At the conclusion of lesson 4, the leaders spent seven minutes privately praying through Psalm 25:1-11. They were provided with bullet points that reviewed the basic information they had just learned to assist them as they prayed through a psalm, perhaps for the first time on their own. When the participants completed this individual exercise, we came together to discuss our experience. For homework, they were told to practice praying through a psalm for seven minutes each day. Based on advice from Whitney's book, they were encouraged to begin with the following Psalms: 23, 27, 31, 37, 42, 66, 103, and 139.

### **Lesson 5: Praying the Psalms II**

We met on Wednesday, June 29 for our fifth session. All five leaders were present. We began by discussing our experience of praying through the Psalms each day of the prior week. It was encouraging to hear participants share. To aid our discussion, we

read some of the comments Whitney has heard from people after their first experiences of praying through the Psalms. As we read through the comments, the leaders spoke up when a particular comment reflected their own experience. For example, four of the five leaders resonated with the comment, “I thought more deeply about what the Bible says,” and three of them agreed with the comment, “I prayed about things I normally don’t pray about.” All five leaders had a positive experience as they prayed through the Psalms.

After group discussion, we reviewed the material that was covered in lesson 4. For this review, I asked them to explain to me, in their own words, the direct and indirect methods of praying through the psalms, and to explain how we can include the things we normally pray about as we pray through the Psalms. The leaders were able to give the correct answers to each question.

While teaching Senior High campers how to pray through the Psalms at Pickerel Lake Lutheran Bible Camp, I came up with a simple phrase to succinctly summarize the basic method: “read; pause; pray,” or, “read; pause; pray; repeat.” Although this phrase was not included in the curriculum, I told the leaders of SLC to write it in the margins of the curriculum.

Lesson 5 also includes a section about how to pray through the imprecatory or curse psalms. There are about twelve psalms classified as imprecatory psalms, which is not much considering there are 150 psalms. However, imprecatory or curse elements appear in many more psalms than the twelve that are often designated as such. Most of the lament psalms contain one or more verses in which the Psalmist (often David) calls upon God to punish his enemies. Because the imprecatory psalms are troubling for many people, lesson five acknowledges their difficulty, offers brief instruction about them, and suggests how Christians today might pray through them. After this section, the group discussed the following question: “What do you think about praying through the imprecatory psalms?” One participant replied, “it makes our prayer life more complete.”

This was a good insight because many Christians have never prayed anything like what we find in the imprecatory psalms.

For a closing activity, we prayed through Psalm 103 as a group. This was their first time praying corporately through a psalm. We prayed for about ten minutes together, allowing the words of the psalm to guide and direct our prayers. For homework, the participants were encouraged to continue their practice of praying through the Psalms for at least seven minutes each day.

### **Lesson 6: Praying the Psalms III**

We met for our sixth and final session together on Tuesday, July 5. Unfortunately, two of the members were absent because they thought we were scheduled to meet the following day. I was able to teach lesson 6 to these two leaders on Wednesday, July 6. However, I was disappointed our group could not be all together for our final session.

Like lesson 3, lesson 6 has a very practical focus. It demonstrates how to lead a prayer meeting based on a psalm. This lesson should be used in close conjunction with appendix B of the curriculum, entitled, “Prayer Meeting Template Based on a Psalm.” This template provides an order of service for a prayer meeting that culminates in the participants praying corporately through a psalm. According to the template, before the group prays through a psalm, there is a time for instruction on how to pray through a psalm as well as a time for the group members to practice praying through a psalm individually. This individual exercise will help the participants be ready to pray through a psalm corporately at the conclusion of the meeting. The leader of the group is responsible for teaching the group how to pray through a psalm. He or she will use material from lessons 4 and 5 of the curriculum in order to teach those who come to the prayer meeting. The leader is encouraged to create learning-aids to help the group learn the material well.

Lesson 6 teaches how to lead a group through praying a psalm in a way that promotes group participation. Most of this section is based on guidance found in Whitney's book, *Praying the Bible*, in an appendix entitled "Praying the Bible with a Group."<sup>6</sup> To summarize this method, Whitney encourages the prayer leader to curate the psalm ahead of time by selecting the verses or phrases most conducive to group prayer and by omitting the verses that might prove difficult for group prayer. The prayer leader is to read aloud a verse and then pause to allow the group to pray based on that verse. After a time, the leader is to read aloud the next verse in the psalm that is most conducive to group prayer. The leader follows this pattern until it is time for the prayer meeting to conclude.

At the conclusion of lesson 6, we spent time discussing the template for a prayer meeting based on a psalm. We discussed the structure and the order of service. We discussed how we might best teach the group how to pray through a psalm. Finally, we concluded our time by corporately praying through Psalm 37 using the method for group prayer that the leaders had just learned. I modeled how to lead the group praying through this psalm.

For homework, the leaders were asked to prepare an order of service for a prayer meeting based on a psalm. They were to prepare learning-aids that would help the group learn how to pray through a psalm. And they were asked to prepare and curate a psalm ahead of time so the group could focus on praying through the verses most conducive to corporate prayer. In short, they were assigned to do everything necessary to prepare to lead a prayer meeting at SLC based on a psalm.

Before dismissing the leaders of SLC, I reminded them to take the UPPS survey again, once they finished their last homework assignment. I also told the leaders to prepare for a role-play exercise in which they would each pretend to lead a prayer

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<sup>6</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 93-96.

meeting and I would evaluate them. As a template for this mock prayer meeting, they could use their completed homework assignments from lesson 3 (to lead a prayer meeting based on the Lord's Prayer) or lesson 6 (to lead a prayer based on a psalm). I gave them the evaluation rubric which I would use to evaluate them so that they could know exactly how to prepare for this role-play evaluation.<sup>7</sup>

### **Post-Surveys**

After the participants finished going through the curriculum, they took the UPPS surveys once again and turned them in to me. For a comparison and analysis of the survey results, see chapter 5 and appendix 1.

### **Role-Play Evaluation**

After the leaders finished going through the curriculum, they demonstrated their ability to lead prayer meetings through a role-play exercise. Each leader acted as if he or she were leading a prayer meeting at SLC. The leaders were expected to create orders of service and learning-aids for this exercise. They were expected to first teach how to pray through the Lord's Prayer or a psalm and then they were to lead the group in a time of corporate prayer. I evaluated them using the role-play evaluation rubric found in appendix 3. I met with David Mattson, the chairman of SLC, for his role-play evaluation on July 15, 2022. I met with Jon and Sarah Marohl on July 27. And I met with Phil and Linda Peterson for their evaluation on July 28. Although I intended to evaluate each leader individually, I made an exception for Phil and Linda Peterson who performed this exercise together. Phil and Linda are in their seventies. Phil said that he is not as sharp as he once was and that it is hard for him to focus enough to organize and lead something like this. He and Linda, his wife, asked if they could lead this exercise together. I told them it was fine so long as they each took turns leading different elements of the prayer

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<sup>7</sup> See appendix 3.

meeting. For the evaluations of this role-play exercise see chapter 5 as well as appendix 3.

### **Conclusion**

The best part of the implementation process was meeting together with the leaders of SLC on a regular basis for prayer and time in God's word. We bonded together as a group and we became united in our vision regarding the importance of coming together as a congregation for prayer. As the following chapter will seek to demonstrate, this training process equipped the leaders of SLC to lead prayer meetings based on the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This final chapter evaluates my project's purpose and goals. It discusses strengths and weaknesses of my project including what I would do differently if I were to do the project again. Finally, this chapter offers some theological and personal reflections that I have come to as a result of completing this project.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to strengthen the spiritual life of SLC by equipping its spiritual leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. Five leaders of SLC went through a six-week curriculum to be trained to accomplish this purpose. As I will discuss further in the following section about the project's goals, going through this curriculum adequately equipped the leaders of SLC to lead prayer meetings based on the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

This project sought to accomplish its purpose through meeting three goals. A specific research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of these three goals.<sup>1</sup>

#### **First Goal**

The first goal was to assess the spiritual leaders' current understanding and practice of prayer. This goal was measured by administering the Understanding and

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<sup>1</sup> All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee.

Practice of Prayer Survey (UPPS) to the five leaders selected.<sup>2</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when the leaders completed the UPPS and the results were analyzed in order to gain a clearer picture of their understanding and practice of prayer.

The five leaders of SLC successfully completed the UPPS surveys before we met together to study the first lesson of the curriculum. In order to maintain the anonymity of each leader, they did not include their names on the surveys, but instead they were given surveys with the following tags for designation: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon.

Reading through the leaders' completed surveys gave me a sufficient overview of their understanding and practice of prayer. My primary reaction to reading through the first round of surveys was that these five leaders already had rich and consistent prayer lives. According to their responses, these leaders consistently (either daily or several times per week) set aside time for Bible reading and prayer. Most of them responded that they attend church virtually every week. Question 12 of part 1 of the survey allows the respondents to declare how many times they have read a Christian book on prayer. Three of the leaders responded, "three or four times in my life." One responded, "many times in my life." And one responded, "once or twice in my life." These leaders were not novices to a theology of prayer nor did they have poor prayer habits. Most of the leaders indicated that their Bible-reading already shaped and influenced their prayers (see part 2, questions 3-11; part 3, question 3), which is essentially what I wanted to train them to do. I began to wonder, "Can I teach these leaders anything about prayer?"

Although the first round of surveys indicated that these leaders already had a salutary understanding of prayer and faithful habits of prayer, I concluded that my curriculum would give them instruction and tools to enrich their prayer lives even further. They may already have rich private lives of prayer, but they still needed assistance before

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix 1.

they could lead a prayer meeting at SLC. This is indicated, especially, by reading their responses to questions 11 and 12 of part 3. Further, some of the leaders indicated that they were not very comfortable praying aloud. I hoped that going through this curriculum would give them practice and confidence in praying aloud. Most respondents indicated that they often found it hard to stay on track or to remain focused while praying. I hoped that going through my curriculum would mitigate this problem by teaching them to use the petitions of the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms as a guide and would help them to stay focused (on good things!) while praying.

My first goal was successfully met because the leaders completed the UPPS before going through the curriculum and the results gave me a clearer picture of their understanding and practice of prayer.

## **Second Goal**

The second goal was to develop a six-lesson curriculum designed to equip the leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms.<sup>3</sup> This goal was measured by an expert panel consisting of four ministry leaders (one professor/pastor, two senior pastors, and one educator/youth ministry leader). This expert panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the curriculum to measure its biblical faithfulness, scope, pedagogy, and practicality for use in the congregation.<sup>4</sup> The parameters set for the successful completion of this goal was that a minimum of ninety percent of the evaluation criterion would have to meet or exceed the sufficient level on the evaluation rubric.

The combined responses from the expert panel determined that my curriculum met this goal. Ninety-seven percent, or 31 out of 32 possible criteria components, met or exceeded the sufficient level on the evaluation rubric. The panel members were also given space for making additional comments about my curriculum. For instance, Dr.

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<sup>3</sup> This curriculum is included in appendix 4.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 2.

Olson encouraged me to include additional discussion questions throughout the curriculum. Two of the experts encouraged me to delete a particular section of one of the lessons, which I did. Michelle Olson (no relation to Dr. Olson) encouraged me to re-work lessons 3 and 6 of the curriculum for the purposes of clarity and uniformity to the rest of the lessons. Although I did not implement all of her suggested feedback (because no one else indicated the same problems that she did) I did my best to make those lessons clearer. Mrs. Olson and Pastor John Mochel thought that some lessons covered too much material for my goal of a one-hour session. Therefore, I looked for places to cut material, especially in the two longest lessons. I am very thankful for the helpful feedback from each member of the expert panel. My curriculum became better as a result.

### **Third Goal**

The third goal was to implement the curriculum and equip the leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. As described in chapter 4 above, I taught this curriculum to the leaders of SLC over the course of six weeks. This goal was measured in part by administering the UPPS to the leaders before and after they went through the curriculum. Additionally, each of the leaders demonstrated, through role-play, his or her ability to lead a prayer meeting based upon the Lord's Prayer or a psalm. During this role-play exercise, I evaluated their competency to lead prayer meetings by using an evaluation rubric.<sup>5</sup> My third goal was considered successfully met when a comparison of the UPPS responses demonstrated a positive change in the leaders' understanding and practice of prayer. In addition, this goal was considered successfully met when each leader scored at the sufficient level or above on the evaluation rubric.

The UPPS responses after the leaders went through the curriculum demonstrated some positive changes in the leaders' practice of prayer when compared

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix 3.

with the first round of questions. This can be seen by a comparison of part 3 of the UPPS, which gave the leaders an opportunity to answer twelve open-ended questions. A comparison of their responses shows that going through the curriculum helped them in their own personal prayer lives. All of the leaders indicated, in some fashion, that their study of the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms positively enhanced their prayer habits. I will offer a few examples. Question 7 of part 3 asks the leaders, "What kinds of things do you mostly pray about?" To which Alpha, in the second survey, responded, "Praying the Psalms has helped me to focus more on God and who he is and what he has done and what he is doing."<sup>6</sup> Question 2 asks, "Do you use anything to help you stay on track when you pray?" To which Gamma responded, in the second survey, by saying, "After this course, I have come to appreciate using the Psalms and Lord's Prayer more often and as a tool to help me." Question 3 asks the leaders, "Does reading the Bible enhance or inform your prayer time in any way?" In the first survey, Delta replied, "Only occasionally." However, in the second survey, Delta responded to the same question, "It enhances my prayer time by expanding my spiritual concerns." Epsilon also responded to question 3 in a way that shows the positive impact that going through the curriculum had on him or her by writing, "Using the Lord's Prayer and Psalms as a springboard, it is much easier to pray for people and situations I wouldn't normally think of. Both of these also help me to stay focused and not have my mind wander so much. And I know I am prayed [*sic*] for things impressed on my heart from the Word." In light of a comparison of the responses found in part 3 of the UPPS, it seems that studying this curriculum had a positive impact on the leaders' practice of prayer. Although, a positive impact upon their understanding of prayer was not clearly demonstrated.

Now I will discuss the results of the role-play evaluation exercise. This exercise gave each leader a practice run at leading a prayer meeting. As part of the

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix 1 for this response and the following responses.

curriculum, the leaders were assigned homework to create orders of service and handouts that would be necessary to lead one prayer meeting based on the Lord's Prayer and another based on a psalm. This role-play exercise gave them an opportunity to take that homework and put it to practice as if they were leading a prayer meeting at SLC. I let the leaders choose whether they wanted to lead this practice prayer meeting based on the Lord's Prayer or based on a psalm. Only one leader (Jon Marohl) chose to lead a prayer meeting based on the Lord's Prayer, the rest chose a psalm. The reason for this is likely the timing. When it was time for the role-play exercise, the leaders had just recently completed their homework assignment to create everything necessary to lead a prayer meeting based on a psalm.

David Mattson was the first leader I met with for the role-play exercise. He chose to lead a prayer meeting based on Psalm 27. He created an order of service, complete with hymns, time for instruction, time for prayer requests, and time for individual and corporate prayer. His order of service sheet also included helpful learning-aids, with complementary examples, to instruct people how to pray through a psalm. David did a wonderful job leading this role-play exercise. However, at times I think he forgot to pretend that there were some people in attendance who knew nothing about praying through a psalm. He also should have included more time for participants to offer feedback and input. David scored a "sufficient" or "exemplary" mark on four out of five components. I gave him a "requires attention" mark on the component about promoting group participation. We discussed this feedback together and I am confident that David is ready to lead a prayer meeting at SLC.

Next, I met with Jon Marohl for his role-play exercise. Jon led this simulated prayer meeting on the Lord's Prayer. He provided me with a very professional-looking prayer meeting outline and agenda. It contained all the necessary elements for a prayer meeting, including hymns, instruction on the various petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and bullet points for things we could pray about under each petition. Jon is a gifted

communicator and leader. He scored “exemplary” on four components and “sufficient” on one. The one “sufficient” mark was because, at times, he assumed that participants knew some things which, perhaps, not all would know at a real prayer meeting. I concluded, with excitement, that Jon is very well-prepared to lead an upcoming prayer meeting at SLC.

Right after meeting with Jon, I met with his wife, Sarah Marohl. Sarah participated as an “attendee” during Jon’s simulated prayer meeting. And Jon, likewise, participated during Sarah’s role-play exercise. This was nice because the three of us could take turns reading, answering questions, and participating in the mock prayer meeting. Sarah chose to lead her prayer meeting based on Psalm 25. She created an order of service with all the necessary elements for a prayer meeting. Sarah did an excellent job of pretending that there were new people in attendance who did not necessarily feel comfortable praying out loud in a group setting. Sarah made such participants feel comfortable. She kept the focus on the Lord, on Scripture, and on the great privilege of coming together as the body of Christ for prayer. She included a handout with the words of Psalm 25. Some of the verses were in black type, while other verses were faded, in gray type. This is something she learned from the curriculum as a way to curate a psalm beforehand, by focusing on the verses most conducive for group prayer. She led us to pray out loud based on the verses in black type, not gray. And yet, it was still helpful for us to be able to see the verses in gray type in order to comprehend the psalm. While Sarah included some learning-aids on her handouts, I felt she could have provided more in this area. Therefore, I gave her one “requires attention” mark for the component about providing learning-aids. On all the other components she received either “sufficient” or “exemplary” marks. Sarah is ready to lead prayer meetings at SLC. Perhaps she and Jon could lead one together.

Finally, I met with Phil and Linda Peterson at their home for the role-play exercise. Phil had previously told me that he is not as sharp as he once was and that it is

hard for him to focus sufficiently to organize and lead something like this. He asked if he and Linda could lead this exercise together. I said that would be fine as long as they both took turns leading different components of the prayer meeting. They chose to lead a simulated prayer meeting based on Psalm 27. Due to some technical difficulties, they were not able to provide uniform handouts to each participant (one for Phil, Linda, and me). They had written out an order of service and asked their daughter to type it up for them and e-mail it to them to print off. However, they did not receive the e-mail from their daughter or were unable to find it. Therefore, Linda had a hand-written order of service before her from which the prayer meeting was led. Phil also had an order of service before him, but it was different from the one Linda had. This caused some confusion in how they led the prayer meeting. At times they had to pause and discuss with each other what element would come next in the prayer meeting. I was patient with them, sympathized with them regarding not receiving the e-mail that they were counting on, and assured them that the most important thing for us was to spend time in prayer together. However, I did give them a “requires attention” mark on the component about providing an order of service. This same problem also led to receiving a “requires attention” mark on the component about confidently leading the group from one element of the service to the next. They lacked confidence in this regard because they were not working from the same order of service.

However, Phil and Linda did a wonderful job with every other aspect of leading this simulated prayer meeting. They provided me with a handout that served as a learning-aid as they took turns teaching how to pray through a psalm. They did a great job with the teaching element. And they did a great job promoting group participation. Our time together concluded with group prayer based on Psalm 27, led by Phil and Linda, but also with my participation. Due to the issues mentioned above, Phil and Linda received “requires attention” marks on two related components, but they received “sufficient” or “exemplary” marks on the other three components. I believe that with

proper assistance from someone more computer-savvy than they are, Phil and Linda will be able to provide a uniform order of service to attendees and competently lead a prayer meeting at SLC.

This role-play exercise gave the leaders an opportunity to demonstrate their ability and readiness to lead prayer meetings at SLC based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. Mostly, the leaders scored "sufficient" or "exemplary" marks on their role-play evaluation forms. Although some leaders received one or two "requires attention" marks on their forms, the components requiring attention are easily remedied. Now the leaders know exactly what they need to do to improve the components that require attention in order for them to lead real prayer meetings at SLC. This role-play exercise demonstrated that the leaders have been adequately equipped to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. Therefore, the third goal for this project has been met satisfactorily.

### **Strengths of the Project**

The greatest strength of this project was that it provided time for me, the pastor of SLC, to meet consistently with five other leaders of our congregation. Our time together was spent primarily by studying God's word about prayer and by praying together. The ultimate purpose of our meetings was to strengthen the spiritual life of SLC by preparing to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. We became united in this vision and purpose. As a group of leaders, we long to see our congregation come together on a regular basis for corporate prayer. The six of us who met together bonded in our love for one another and began to see each other as co-laborers in the ministry of the gospel at SLC.

The ultimate purpose of this project has the strength of the whole congregation in view. Yet, this project directly impacted the spiritual lives of the five leaders who went through the curriculum. As indicated above while discussing the third goal of this project,

the leaders were positively affected in their prayer lives as a result of going through this curriculum.

A related strength of this project was the creation of the curriculum itself. There are lots of resources available to help Christians organize and lead prayer meetings. But this curriculum is advantageous because of its narrow focus (on the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms) and because it provides a step-by-step process and even a template for leading prayer meetings. In his comments on the curriculum evaluation rubric, Dr. Nathan Olson wrote the following:

I found that this curriculum serves as a helpful and beneficial tool in assessing how to lead those in the church to a place where they are equipped to lead a prayer meeting on their own. Even for someone who has little to no experience in doing such, the step-by-step instruction provides a helpful layout for someone to follow to successfully arrive at that outcome.

Beyond helping the leaders of SLC, I believe this curriculum is replicable and user-friendly for other Christians who desire to lead prayer meetings in their ministry contexts. The curriculum can also be split in half. It can serve as a three-week study on leading prayer meetings based on the Lord's Prayer and another three-week study on leading prayer meetings based on the Psalms. Finally, this curriculum is rooted in God's word and the historic practice of the church. For, God's people have used the Psalms and the Lord's Prayer in their corporate prayers for millennia.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

The main weakness of this project regards the measurement instruments I used or did not use for assessing the third goal for this project. The third goal was to implement the curriculum and equip the leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. I used two instruments to measure the success of this goal. First, a comparison of the UPPS results. Second, the leaders participated in a role-play exercise. I think the role-play exercise went very well. However, the UPPS was not a great instrument to measure positive change in the leaders' ability to lead prayer meetings

at SLC. There were fifty-two questions, many of which were extraneous and unnecessary. This made analysis cumbersome and inefficient. To evaluate change, I found it best to compare the final twelve open-ended questions of the survey. This satisfactorily demonstrated some positive change regarding the personal prayer habits of the leaders. However, a more thorough analysis could have been done with fewer total questions and a narrower focus on measuring the third goal. On a positive note, I believe the UPPS was a good instrument for accomplishing my first goal, which was to assess the spiritual leaders' current understanding and practice of prayer.

Another weakness has to do with something I did not do. The third goal could have been more adequately measured by giving the leaders an opportunity to lead corporate prayer based on a psalm or the Lord's Prayer during a public worship service. Together with the role-play exercise on leading a one-hour prayer meeting, this additional opportunity to lead corporate prayer during a worship service would have demonstrated the leaders' ability to lead corporate prayer. Although I did not ask the leaders to do this for the completion of this ministry project, I could certainly ask them to lead corporate prayer at a worship service in the future.

The final weakness I will mention has to do with chapter 2 of this project. This chapter put forth the theological and exegetical basis for this project. I should have studied at least one psalm in this chapter because half of my curriculum dealt with the Psalms. When I wrote chapter 2, I only knew that I wanted to equip the leaders to lead Bible-based, corporate prayer. I had not yet narrowed the scope of my curriculum to focus on the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. Since my DMin program concentration was New Testament exposition, I chose four passages from the New Testament that dealt with corporate prayer. This was a fruitful study, especially the passage from Luke 11, in which Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer to his disciples. Though, in retrospect, I should also have included the exposition of a psalm.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

As mentioned in the previous section, if I were able to do this project again, I would give the leaders an opportunity to lead corporate prayer based on the Lord's Prayer or a psalm during a Sunday worship service. This would be a great way for the leaders to demonstrate and implement what they learned.

If I were to do this project again, I would also spend more time researching how to best use surveys as a measurement tool. I would include fewer questions and they would be extremely focused on what I would be trying to measure. I would ask several questions about their personal prayer habits. Then I would ask questions to measure their readiness or confidence regarding leading prayer meetings. I would formulate the questions in such a way that it would be relatively easy, afterwards, to see whether studying the curriculum made a positive impact on these two areas. Therefore, the survey questions would be fewer and more focused.

Finally, the role-play exercise was a good instrument to gauge whether the leaders were ready to lead prayer meetings. However, one of the leaders had some anxiety about going through this exercise. If I could do it again, I would go out of my way to put the participants at ease and make them feel very comfortable about the role-play exercise.

### **Theological Reflections**

A common hindrance for most Christians, myself included, is that we lack the proper motivation to pray. Studying the New Testament passages about prayer for chapter 2 of this project showed me the proper motivation for prayer. Yes, God commands us to pray. Therefore, we must. Yet, in each of the passages I studied (Luke 11:1-13; 1 Tim 2:1-7; Jas 5:13-18), the command to pray is grounded in God's gracious promises. In Luke 11, Jesus grounds his command to pray in several illustrations that show how eager the heavenly Father is to hear and answer the prayers of his children. In 1 Timothy 2, Paul's command to pray for all people is grounded in the gracious truths of

the gospel, that God desires all people to be saved and that Christ Jesus is the one mediator who has given himself as a ransom for all. Finally, in James 5, the command to pray is grounded in God's promise that he will answer all those who pray with faith. Therefore, the biblical command for us to pray is grounded in God's promise to graciously hear and answer our prayers.

I will give one brief reflection based on the historical survey I completed for chapter 3 of this project. From the beginning, the church has prioritized corporate prayer. Corporate prayer takes thoughtful planning and organization for it to benefit the body of Christ that prays together. Sources from the early church and the church in the time of the Reformation indicate that the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms were frequently used as resources for corporate prayer. Using these two resources for corporate prayer is both biblical and in conformity with the ancient practice of the church.

A final theological reflection has to do with equipping members of the body of Christ. Here at SLC, we have some very strong Christians who are eager to serve God and his church. The five leaders involved in this project were such Christians. They had zeal, although they needed direction and training before they could effectively lead prayer meetings. I believe this is the case in many congregations. Pastors ought to be aware of this and willing to equip believers for specific ministry opportunities. Georg Sverdrup, a founder of the Free Lutheran Church, writes eloquently about this matter:

The congregation lives and exists to work. It is a gathering of workers. The congregation is not organized unless there is work for everyone. There is no congregation where a gathering of people "hire" a pastor to work for them so that they can get by without doing so. No, the congregation can be compared in that way with a musical choir, which must have a director to lead and instruct. Is the instructor to sing alone? Are not all supposed to join in? So it is in the congregation. It is a gathering of servants of God who work for the Kingdom of God, for the cause of Christ. In such a group the leader is not superfluous; he is, in fact, all the more necessary.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John M. Stensvaag, "The Living Congregation: Georg Sverdrup's Views on Lay Activity in the Church," *Sverdrup Journal* 8 (2011): 13.

## **Personal Reflections**

I will share two personal reflections. First, having to teach others about prayer was a humbling endeavor because it revealed my own feeble prayer habits. Yet, as I studied, wrote, and taught, I also sought to practice what I learned about prayer. I have come to treasure the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms as indispensable aids in my personal prayer life. Like Luther taught in *A Simple Way to Pray*, I now pause to meditate on each petition of the Lord's Prayer, often not on all the petitions in one session, but lingering on one or two petitions. As Whitney taught in *Praying the Bible*, I read slowly and thoughtfully through a psalm, pausing after particular verses to pray about what I have read. The Lord has used these simple methods to strengthen my spirit and to grant consistency to my prayer habits.

Second, I found that I really enjoyed writing the curriculum. As a pastor, I have always enjoyed preparing and leading Bible studies. But I have never put as much work into preparing a study as I did for this curriculum. I received very positive feedback regarding the curriculum from the leaders who went through it. I hope that other congregations will be able to implement it for their own benefit. I am now inclined to pursue writing and creating Bible studies in the future in order to serve the body of Christ.

## **Conclusion**

By God's grace, this project has adequately equipped five leaders of SLC to lead prayer meetings based on the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. The ultimate purpose of this project was to strengthen the spiritual life of SLC. This purpose will only come to pass, with God's help, as the leaders now implement what they have learned by actually leading prayer meetings at SLC. I hope this will become a regular occurrence in our congregation. I also hope this project will benefit those who desire biblical guidance in leading prayer meetings in their own ministry contexts. I encourage such people to utilize

and, if necessary, modify the curriculum found in appendix 4, *How to Lead Prayer Meetings with the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms*.

APPENDIX 1  
UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE  
OF PRAYER SURVEY

This survey (the UPPS) was given to the leaders initially to assess their understanding and practice of prayer, with an emphasis on practice. It also asks them about their confidence to lead corporate prayer. It is a mixed method survey, utilizing multiple choice questions, a Likert scale, and open-ended questions.<sup>1</sup> Once the leaders completed the curriculum, the UPPS was administered to them again in order to gauge whether the curriculum brought about an improvement in their understanding and practice of prayer.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the following survey questions have been adapted from the appendices of the following three ministry research projects: Bruce Allen Barber, “Developing an Intercessory Prayer Ministry to Support Personal Evangelism at First Baptist Church, Roanoke, Texas” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011); John Robert Hancock, “Developing a Prayer Ministry at Wheeler Baptist Church in Wheeler, Mississippi” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012); Theodore John Richard, “Equipping Members of Pendleton Street Baptist Church, Greenville, South Carolina to Use the Bible in a Daily Time of Study and Prayer” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

## UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE OF PRAYER SURVEY

### Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding and practice of prayer by the participant. This research is being conducted by Jarrod Hylden for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

### Part 1

1. Do you consider yourself a Christian?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
  
2. Are you living in daily repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ for salvation?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
  
3. I read my Bible (check only one)  
 A. more than once per day  
 B. once per day  
 C. several times per week  
 D. once per week  
 E. several times per month  
 F. once per month  
 G. several times per year  
 H. not at all
  
4. I attend church on Sundays (check only one)  
 A. virtually every week  
 B. 3-4 times a month  
 C. twice per month  
 D. once per month  
 E. less than once per month  
 F. rarely  
 G. not at all

5. I pray (check only one)
- A. many times throughout the day
  - B. several times per day
  - C. twice per day
  - D. once per day
  - E. less than once per day
6. I have a specific time set aside for private prayer each day.
- A. Yes
  - B. No
7. I have a specific time set aside for prayer with my family and/or spouse each day.
- A. Yes
  - B. No
  - C. N/A
8. I pray with my family and/or spouse (choose only one)
- A. more than once per day
  - B. once per day
  - C. several times per week
  - D. once per week
  - E. several times per month
  - F. once per month
  - G. several times per year
  - H. not at all
  - I. N/A
9. I most often pray for (check all that apply)
- A. myself
  - B. family
  - C. friends
  - D. church
  - E. neighbors
  - F. coworkers
  - G. missionaries
  - H. other
10. I pray The Lord's Prayer (check only one)
- A. more than once per day
  - B. once per day
  - C. several times per week
  - D. once per week at church
  - E. less than once per week
  - H. not at all

11. Besides Sunday mornings at church, I pray together with people besides my family (check only one)

- A. several times per week
- B. once per week
- C. several times per month
- D. once per month
- E. several times per year
- F. not at all

12. I have read a Christian book on prayer (check only one)

- A. many times in my life
- B. three or four times in my life
- C. once or twice in my life
- D. never

Directions: The following questions ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

**Part 2**

- |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. I believe that God always hears and answers my prayers.                           | S  | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. I am comfortable praying out loud in the presence of others.                      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. When I am done reading the Bible, I usually spend time praying about what I read. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. I seldom pray about what I have read in the Bible.                                | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I often use the Psalms as a guide for my own prayers.                             | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. Praying the Lord's Prayer is an essential aspect of my regular prayer life.       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. I understand the meaning of each petition of the Lord's Prayer.                   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. When God uses the Bible to convict me of sin, I confess my sin in prayer.         | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

9. When God uses the Bible to comfort me or assure me of salvation, I offer praise or thanksgiving to God in prayer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10. When God uses the Bible to instruct my behavior, I pray for God's help to obey.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11. When reading the Bible makes me think of someone else, I pray for that person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12. I need to be taught how to pray more effectively.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. I pray more than ten minutes per day.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. I pray less than ten minutes per day.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. I spend most of my time in prayer for the physical needs of myself and the people I love.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. I consistently spend time in prayer for the spiritual needs of myself and the people I love.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. Apart from church on Sundays, I pray at least once a week for the people in my congregation.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. I confess my sins each day and pray for forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. I pray each day for the Holy Spirit to help me live according to God's will.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. I believe it is important for our congregation to pray together.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. I would like to spend more time praying together with the people of my congregation.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

22. After praying for the well-being of my family, I often don't know what to pray for.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I often lose focus or find it hard to stay on track when I am praying.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. I sometimes doubt that my prayers are effective.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25. I pray more when I am facing difficulty than when things are going well.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26. I pray at least once a week for the salvation of someone who is not a Christian.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27. I have been taught specifically how to pray.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
28. In general, I am satisfied with my prayer life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA



7. What kinds of things do you mostly pray about?

8. What kinds of things do you think you should pray about more?

9. If we were to have a prayer meeting at SLC, what kinds of things should we pray about?

10. If we were to have a prayer meeting at SLC, how should we stay on track (remain focused) as a group?

11. Do you think you are able to lead a corporate prayer meeting at SLC? Why or why not?

12. How do you think you need to mature and grow before you could lead a prayer meeting?

APPENDIX 2  
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

An expert panel utilized this rubric to evaluate the curriculum to measure its biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and practicality for ministry in the congregation.

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
Each lesson covers an appropriate amount of material for a one-hour lesson.					
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum clearly explains how to lead a prayer meeting.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to lead prayer meetings based on the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms.					

Other Comments:

## APPENDIX 3

### ROLE-PLAY EVALUATION RUBRIC

The leaders of SLC demonstrated their ability to lead prayer meetings through role-play. Each leader acted as if he or she were leading a prayer meeting at SLC. The leaders created orders of service and provided learning aids for this exercise. The course instructor (Jarrod Hylden) evaluated the leaders using the following rubric.

<b>Role-Play Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Organization</b>					
The leader provided a clear, well thought-out order of service for the prayer meeting that included all the necessary elements.					
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
The leader skillfully and succinctly taught the participants everything they needed to know in order to pray through The Lord's Prayer or a psalm.					
The leader provided helpful learning aids for the participants.					
<b>Leadership</b>					
The leader confidently led the group from one element of the service to the next.					
The leader promoted group participation.					

Participant: David Mattson

<b>Role-Play Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Organization</b>					
The leader provided a clear, well thought-out order of service for the prayer meeting that included all the necessary elements.				X	Excellent.
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
The leader skillfully and succinctly taught the participants everything they needed to know in order to pray through The Lord's Prayer or a psalm.			X		Assume the participants know nothing. Say obvious things to help them.
The leader provided helpful learning aids for the participants.				X	Excellent.
<b>Leadership</b>					
The leader confidently led the group from one element of the service to the next.				X	Great job!
The leader promoted group participation.		X			Look for more ways to invite feedback and comments.

Participant: Jon Marohl

<b>Role-Play Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Organization</b>					
The leader provided a clear, well thought-out order of service for the prayer meeting that included all the necessary elements.				X	Excellent order of service.
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
The leader skillfully and succinctly taught the participants everything they needed to know in order to pray through The Lord's Prayer or a psalm.			X		At times you assumed that we knew things. But mostly you taught very well.
The leader provided helpful learning aids for the participants.				X	Very professional and helpful!
<b>Leadership</b>					
The leader confidently led the group from one element of the service to the next.				X	Great!
The leader promoted group participation.				X	You included others well.

Participant: Sarah Marohl

<b>Role-Play Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Organization</b>					
The leader provided a clear, well thought-out order of service for the prayer meeting that included all the necessary elements.				X	Very clear. Great song selections!
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
The leader skillfully and succinctly taught the participants everything they needed to know in order to pray through The Lord's Prayer or a psalm.			X		You're a natural teacher and communicator. You could have spent a little more time explaining how to pray through a psalm.
The leader provided helpful learning aids for the participants.		X			Participants should see the examples of direct/indirect appropriation, etc.
<b>Leadership</b>					
The leader confidently led the group from one element of the service to the next.				X	Very good!
The leader promoted group participation.				X	Excellent. You helped us participate and feel welcome.

Participants: Phil and Linda Peterson

<b>Role-Play Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Organization</b>					
The leader provided a clear, well thought-out order of service for the prayer meeting that included all the necessary elements.		X			We were not all looking at the same order of service.
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
The leader skillfully and succinctly taught the participants everything they needed to know in order to pray through The Lord's Prayer or a psalm.			X		Good job!
The leader provided helpful learning aids for the participants.				X	The handout was very helpful.
<b>Leadership</b>					
The leader confidently led the group from one element of the service to the next.		X			The hesitation and confusion in this area was related to not having a uniform order of service.
The leader promoted group participation.				X	Great job inviting participation and discussion!

APPENDIX 4  
CURRICULUM

The following six-lesson curriculum, entitled *How to Lead Prayer Meetings with the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms*, was the primary means of equipping the leaders of SLC to lead prayer meetings based on the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms.

How to Lead  
Prayer Meetings  
With the Lord's Prayer  
and the Psalms

By Rev. Jarrod Hylden

## Introduction

Many congregations desire to have intentional times devoted to corporate prayer, but they lack the guidance to do this effectively. This curriculum aims to give such guidance from God's word. Initially this course was designed to equip the leaders of Skrefsrud Lutheran Church of Beresford, SD to lead prayer meetings. Yet it can be used in any congregation with leaders who are willing to learn and then teach others how to pray together.

There are many good resources available to teach people how to pray together or to lead prayer meetings. This curriculum is unique in that it looks specifically to the Lord's Prayer and to the Psalms as the basis and guide for praying together. When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he gave them a prayer, the first word of which ("our") assumes it will be prayed corporately. In addition, for millennia God's people have used the Psalms as *the* essential resource for both prayer and worship. Why not look to these biblical and ancient prayers to guide our corporate prayer today?

Each of the six lessons in this curriculum is meant to be completed in one hour or less. When the participants have completed this course, they should be equipped to lead prayer meetings based on the petitions of the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. The two appendices at the end of this course should be used as templates for leading such prayer meetings.

This course may be studied as a six-lesson unit or it may be split into two units of three lessons each, one on the Lord's Prayer and the other on the Psalms.

May God fill you with the Holy Spirit to receive wisdom as you ask the Lord Jesus Christ the same question his disciples once asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

## Lesson One: Praying the Lord's Prayer I

Left to ourselves, we would wander aimlessly in prayer. Thankfully, Jesus gives us the words and themes to include when we pray. In both Matthew (6:9-13) and Luke (11:2-4), Jesus gives a model prayer to teach his disciples how to pray. David Garland, a New Testament scholar, said the Lord's Prayer is "to function like a tuning fork by which disciples can measure whether their prayers are in the right pitch. It is to be used as an outline that those who pray it may fill out with their own words."<sup>1</sup> He means that the Lord's Prayer should not only be prayed word for word, but that we should expand upon each petition and pray for the things related to each theme.

In this lesson we will study the meaning of the introduction and the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer and consider how they may serve as a foundation and springboard for further prayer.

### **The Introduction: Our Father, who art in heaven**

This opening phrase is a simple way for us to address God, but it has profound implications. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther explains the meaning of this address:

God thereby tenderly encourages us to believe that He is truly our Father and that we are truly His children, so that we may boldly and confidently come to Him in prayer, even as beloved children come to their dear Father.<sup>2</sup>

Because God is our Father and we are his children, we may boldly and confidently come to him in prayer. Read Matthew 7:9-11, where Jesus illustrates this point clearly and humorously:

<sup>9</sup> Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

His point is that we should confidently pray to our heavenly Father. What a privilege that none of us deserves! Jesus alone is God's eternal and only-begotten Son. And yet, by God's grace we become his adopted children when we believe and are baptized into Christ. Now, we "have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:15b-16).

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<sup>1</sup> David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 460.

<sup>2</sup> *Small Catechism* III 2.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations in this curriculum come from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB).

*Discuss:*

- *How is God honored when we pray boldly and confidently?*
- *Why might God be displeased when we pray without such boldness or confidence? (See James 1:5-8)*

*Springboard for further prayer:*

- *Thank God for adopting us as his children by uniting us to Jesus Christ.*
- *Ask God to give us bold faith and confidence that he will hear and answer our prayers.*

### **The First Petition: Hallowed be Thy Name**

This petition may be the most difficult to understand. It helps to look at a few different translations of Matthew 6:9:

- “Hallowed be your name” (ESV)
- “Your name be honored as holy” (CSB)
- “May your name be honored” (NET)
- “May your name be kept holy.” (NLT)
- “Uphold the holiness of your name” (CEB)

Praying about God’s “name” is like praying about his reputation. We want people to honor God and think very highly of him. In the Large Catechism Martin Luther writes, “to hallow means the same as to praise, magnify, and honor both in word and deed.”<sup>4</sup> Martin Chemnitz, the most important Lutheran theologian from the generation after Luther, concurs, “No doubt, the praise, honor, and renown of God is treated here.”<sup>5</sup>

Read the following verses to better understand the meaning of the first petition:

Isaiah 8:13: “You are to regard only the LORD of Armies as holy. Only he should be feared; only he should be held in awe.”

Isaiah 29:23: “For when [the house of Jacob] sees his children, the work of my hands within his nation, they will honor my name, they will honor the Holy One of Jacob and stand in awe of the God of Israel.”

Ezekiel 20:9: “But I acted for the sake of my name, so that it would not be profaned in the eyes of the nations they were living among, in whose sight I had made myself known to Israel by bringing them out of Egypt.”

Ezekiel 36:22-23: “Therefore, say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Lord God says: It is not for your sake that I will act, house of Israel, but for my holy

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<sup>4</sup> *Large Catechism* III 46.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Chemnitz, *The Lord’s Prayer*, trans. Georg Williams, in *Chemnitz Works*, vol. 5, *Enchiridion, The Lord’s Supper, The Lord’s Prayer* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2007), 35.

name, which you profaned among the nations where you went. <sup>23</sup> I will honor the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations—the name you have profaned among them. The nations will know that I am the Lord—this is the declaration of the Lord God—when I demonstrate my holiness through you in their sight.”

Psalm 148:11-13: “Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all judges of the earth, young men as well as young women, old and young together. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted. His majesty covers heaven and earth.”

Psalm 8:1: “LORD, our Lord, how magnificent is your name throughout the earth!”

1 Peter 3:15a: “But in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy.”

From these passages, we learn that to hallow God’s name means to fear, honor, and stand in awe of him. The opposite, as found in the Ezekiel passages, is to profane God’s name like Israel did when their evil deeds caused the surrounding nations to think poorly of Israel’s God. Psalm 148:11-13 is a great paraphrase of the first petition because it’s a prayer for all people to praise the name of the LORD. 1 Peter 3:15 teaches that we should regard Jesus Christ the same as we regard God the Father, as holy. In the first petition, we should pray “that all people may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father” (John 5:23a).

We do not want people to profane God’s name because of us. Instead, we pray they would see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven (Matt 5:16). God’s name is hallowed when “we as God’s children lead holy lives in accordance with it.”<sup>6</sup>

God’s reputation among people is also affected by the preaching of God’s word. How often, seldom, truly, or falsely this word is preached will affect how God’s name is regarded. Sadly, there are many false teachers who claim to represent God as they preach false and twisted things, supposedly from the Bible. Countless souls are led astray to false worship and unbelief. This is a terrible misuse of God’s name. Therefore, Luther teaches that in the first petition we should pray for God’s word to be taught in its truth and purity.<sup>7</sup> Pray for your pastor and others who faithfully teach the Bible without much fanfare or acclaim. The devil hates such pastors. The world scoffs at them, too. And yet through such preaching, God’s name is honored and sanctified among us.

*Discuss:*

- *What new insight did you learn about the meaning of the first petition?*

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<sup>6</sup> *Small Catechism* III 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Small Catechism* III 5.

- *How are the names of great professional athletes honored after their retirement? How might this help us understand what we pray for in the first petition?*

*Springboard for further prayer:*

- *Pray for all people to praise, honor, and magnify God's holy name (Psalm 148:11-13).*
- *Pray that we, as God's children, would lead holy lives as we represent God to the world.*
- *Pray that God's word would spread abroad and be taught in its truth and purity.*

## **The Second Petition: Thy Kingdom Come**

Other translations:

- “May your kingdom come” (NET)
- “May your kingdom come soon” (NLT)
- “Thy reign come” (YLT)

This petition involves both present and future aspects. It is a request for people to come into God's kingdom now through faith in Christ. And it's a request for the King to return from heaven, to destroy the devil and those aligned with him, and to make “a new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

We long for the day when God will wipe away all tears and when death will be no more (Rev. 21:4). We pray for the “land to be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the sea is filled with water” (Isaiah 11:9). *The Jesus Storybook Bible* paraphrases the second petition this way: “Make everything in the world right again.”<sup>8</sup> This petition will be answered completely when King Jesus returns from heaven. So we pray, “Our Lord, come!” (1 Corinthians 16:22).

Yet even in his first coming Jesus brought God's kingdom near. Through healing, casting out demons, raising the dead, and even through preaching, Jesus reversed the curse of the fall and brought in the blessings of God's kingdom or reign. Notice how the 2<sup>nd</sup> petition is translated by Young's Literal Translation (YLT) above: “Thy reign come.” That is, we are praying for God to come and rule over His creation. In Christ, God has already come to rule over and to restore his fallen creation. By his death and resurrection, Jesus has defeated the devil and made atonement for our sins, opening up God's kingdom to all sinners who repent and believe in him.

Now ascended and reigning from God's right hand, Jesus continues to advance his kingdom, or his reign, on earth through his Spirit and word. This is the present aspect for

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<sup>8</sup> Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, illus. Jago (Grand Rapids: Zonderkidz, 2007), 226.

which we pray in the second petition. We pray for more people to come into God's kingdom by the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's word.

In addition to praying for new converts, we also pray for ourselves. We pray that we would gladly submit to God's rule over our lives by all that we say and do. We pray that God would use us as his instruments to bring the blessings of his kingdom to this fallen world as we love our neighbors and share the gospel.

*Discuss:*

- *When you pray, "Thy kingdom come," do you usually think of the present or future aspects of this petition?*
- *What else did you learn today about the second petition?*

*Springboard for further prayer:*

- *Ask King Jesus to return from heaven and make all things new.*
- *Pray for more people to enter God's kingdom through faith in Jesus today.*
- *Pray that we would gladly submit to God's rule over our lives.*
- *Pray that God would prevent the devil from gaining ground and accomplishing his evil purposes here on earth.*

### **The Third Petition: Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

Most scholars agree that the phrase, "on earth as it is in heaven," applies equally to the first three petitions. This means that we pray for God's name to be honored on earth as his name is perfectly honored in heaven by the angels and departed saints. We pray for God's kingdom to come on earth as it already exists in heaven. And, finally, we pray for God's will to be done on earth just as his will is carried out perfectly in heaven.

What specifically do we pray for in the third petition? According to the Small Catechism, we pray here that God would "destroy and bring to nothing every evil counsel and purpose of the devil, the world, and our own flesh, which would hinder us from hallowing His Name and prevent the coming of His kingdom."<sup>9</sup> In this petition, as in the others, we engage in spiritual warfare.

We also pray that God would give us the strength to walk according to his will. We know that the Ten Commandments express God's will for our lives. We know that Jesus wants us to love God with all our strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40). However, we lack the strength to carry this out. Therefore, in this petition we ask God to help us walk according to his holy will.

Finally, we ask God to help us to submit to his will as we encounter trials and suffering. Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). He also warned them, "If they persecuted

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<sup>9</sup> *Small Catechism* III 11.

me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). Paul wrote that all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted (2 Tim 3:12). Luther taught that Christian maturity cannot be gained apart from trials and suffering. However, these trials are difficult to bear! Some lose their faith because of them (Matthew 13:21)! That’s why we ask God for help to endure trials with patience and faith. Jesus himself prayed as he anticipated the cross, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done” (Matthew 26:42). Like Jesus, we pray for God’s help to do his will, especially when it will involve suffering and sacrifice.

*Discuss:*

- *When people pray for help to do God’s will, what do they usually have in mind?*
- *What might the third petition entail when we pray it specifically for our congregation?*
- *How do the first three petitions overlap in meaning?*

*Springboard for further prayer:*

- *Pray for God to destroy every evil counsel and purpose of the devil, the world, and our own flesh.*
- *Ask for strength to walk according to God’s will, that is, to keep his commandments.*
- *Pray for strength to endure trials & suffering with steadfastness and strong faith.*
- *Pray for our congregation to walk in obedience to God’s will.*

Close by praying about some of the things listed in the “springboard for further prayer” sections of this lesson and by praying the Lord’s Prayer together. (Alternatively, you may use the Expanded Outline found in appendix A.)

Homework: Pray through the Lord’s Prayer each day this week. Expand upon the first three petitions as you pray. Use the “springboard for further prayer” sections as an aid for prayer.

## Lesson 2: The Lord's Prayer II

In this lesson we will study the last four petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

### **The Fourth Petition: Give us this day our daily bread.**

Martin Chemnitz explains, "The word 'bread' in this petition encompasses all things belonging to and necessary for the sustenance of this body and life."<sup>10</sup> *The Jesus Storybook Bible* paraphrases the fourth petition like this: "Please give us everything we need today."<sup>11</sup>

Luther goes beyond what we might normally think of when considering all that we need for this body and life. In this petition he includes good government, faithful rulers, a stable economy, seasonable weather, peace and health, order and honor, true friends, good neighbors, and still more! (See his small and large catechisms).<sup>12</sup> For Luther, this petition includes the needs of the household, the community, and the nation.

Consider some passages related to the fourth petition:

Psalm 145:15-16: "All eyes look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing."

1 Timothy 6:6-8: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these."

Proverbs 30:8b-9: "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."

For further reading you may look up 1 Timothy 2:1-4 and Matthew 6:25-34.

*Discuss:*

- *How do you typically respond when you fear you might be lacking your "daily bread"?*
- *How can we pray more consistently for our nation and its leaders?*
- *Do we sometimes feel like praying for "our daily filet mignon"? How does the fourth petition implicitly teach us about contentment?*

*Springboard for further prayer:*

- *Ask God to provide us with all that we need.*

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<sup>10</sup> Chemnitz, *The Lord's Prayer*, 5:47.

<sup>11</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, 226.

<sup>12</sup> *Small Catechism* III 14; *Large Catechism* III 71-82.

- *Thank God for faithfully providing for us in the past and promising to do so in the future.*
- *Pray for contentment with what God has given us.*
- *Pray for our nation and its leaders.*
- *Pray for our local community, including leaders and institutions.*

**The Fifth Petition: And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

We worship a living God and we have a living relationship with him. We often sin against God with our thoughts, words, and deeds. These sins are like debts accrued and owed to a lender. Our debts are so large that we cannot hope to repay them. Thankfully,

The LORD is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the fathers' iniquity on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 34:6-7).

“The guilty” in this passage are the proud who refuse to repent of their sins. God will certainly punish them. But God, who is by nature compassionate and gracious, promises to forgive all those who repent (1 John 1:9). He promises to remove our sins from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). He does this solely for the sake of Jesus, whose sacrificial death has made atonement for our sins, satisfying God's wrath and turning it away from all who believe (1 John 2:2; cf. John 3:36). When we pray the fifth petition, we give voice to our faith in God's promise to forgive our sins for the sake of Christ. God has promised to answer this prayer with a “Yes” for all who believe in Jesus. As Peter once preached, “Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins” (Acts 10:43b).

The fifth petition comes with the expectation that we who receive forgiveness from God will in turn forgive those who sin against us. Jesus elaborates on this point in Matthew 6:14-15:

For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses.

This teaching may trouble us because it seems like God is placing a condition upon our salvation beyond simply believing in Jesus. But the sober truth is that God will punish those who stubbornly refuse to repent of their sins. The Bible teaches that any sin, left unrepented of, has the potential to cut us off from the living God (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:3-6). Nursing a grudge and being unwilling to forgive is one example of unrepentant sin. If we keep this up, we will grieve the Holy Spirit and eventually fall away from faith in Christ. Jesus illustrates his point even further in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35). Jesus's teaching is also echoed by Paul in Ephesians 4:31-32:

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

God's forgiveness of us in Christ is the foundation and source by which we may then forgive one another. John T. Pless puts it well: "Reconciled to God through the blood of Christ we cannot but forgive our fellow sinners. To refuse to do so is to spurn the forgiveness you have received from the one who made Himself the friend of sinners."<sup>13</sup> When we forgive others we reflect what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. This is how we "imitate" God (Eph. 5:1).

Luther's model prayer based on the fifth petition is worth quoting in full:

O Dear God and Father, enter not into judgment against us, for before You no man living is righteous. And do not count our sins against us. We are so lamentably thankless for all Your unspeakable kindness in both spiritual and bodily matters. We stumble and sin so many times each day, more than we even know and recognize, as we pray in Psalm 19:12.

Do not even consider whether we are pious or evil, but look only on Your boundless mercy that You have so graciously given us in Christ, Your dear Son. Forgive all our enemies, and anyone who would want to harm us or do us injustice, as we forgive them, from the heart. They are doing themselves the greatest harm; we are not helped by their destruction, and would much rather see them saved, with us. Amen.<sup>14</sup>

It is noteworthy that Luther prays for God to forgive his enemies. Do you think he included the Pope in this prayer along with all those who wanted him dead? I'm sure if we prayed this kind of thing regularly it would help us to forgive our enemies. Luther goes on to give this realistic and practical advice: "If anyone feels at this point that he cannot forgive, he should just pray for grace so that he would be able to forgive."<sup>15</sup>

*Discuss:*

- *Why does God promise to forgive our sins when we ask him to do so?*
- *Why does Jesus so strongly emphasize our need to forgive one another?*
- *How might the fifth petition lead us to pray for our congregation?*

*Springboard for further prayer:*

- *Pray for God to give us humble and tender consciences so that we will sincerely confess our sins.*

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<sup>13</sup> John T. Pless, *Praying Luther's Small Catechism* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2016), 69.

<sup>14</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 11.

- *Thank God for his mercy and grace through his Son, Jesus Christ.*
- *Pray that God will help us to forgive, from the heart, those who sin against us.*
- *Pray for reconciliation among brothers and sisters in our congregation.*

**The Sixth and Seventh Petitions: And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

Following tradition, Luther divides Matthew 6:13 into two separate petitions, but others have recognized that this verse contains just one petition said in two different ways. It is a simple disjunctive structure: *not this...but this*. As when someone might pray, “Please do not prolong this drought but give us rain.” This is one request stated negatively then positively.

In the fifth petition we ask God to forgive us. Next, we ask for God’s help to overcome temptation to sin. Our repentance is sincere if we truly want and ask for God’s help to live in a way that pleases him.

The sixth and seventh petitions assume that we are engaged in spiritual warfare. Our enemies are the devil, the world, and our flesh. The devil is mentioned in the last phrase of Matthew 6:13, which can faithfully be translated “from the evil one.” However, “from evil” is also a good translation. Either way, we ask God to rescue us from the devil and all the evil he causes.

Consider how the following passages should stir our hearts to pray the sixth and seventh petitions (Note: the first four passages are about the devil, the next two are about the world, and the last two are about the flesh):

Ephesians 6:11-12: “Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.”

Revelation 12:12b: “Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you with great fury, because he knows his time is short.”

1 Peter 5:8: “Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.”

Luke 22:31-32a: “Simon, Simon, look out. Satan has asked to sift you like wheat. <sup>32</sup>But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.”

Proverbs 1:10: “My son, if sinners entice you, don’t be persuaded.”

1 John 2:15-17: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions—is not

from the Father, but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.”

Matthew 26:41: “Stay awake and pray, so that you won’t enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

James 1:14-15: “But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire. <sup>15</sup> Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.”

Don’t these passages make you want to spend more time in prayer? In Luke 22, Jesus prayed against Satan’s attempt to destroy Peter’s faith. If Jesus thought prayer was a good combat strategy against the devil, so should we! Christ prayed this same basic petition for his disciples in John 17:15: “I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” How wonderful that Jesus prayed this and continues to pray for us! We echo his prayer: “Yes Lord, protect and deliver us from the evil one.”

*Discuss:*

- *When have you felt under spiritual attack by the devil, the world, or the flesh?*
- *What does the devil desire for our congregation?*
- *How might we pray the sixth and seventh petitions on behalf of our congregation?*

*Springboard for further prayer:*

- *Ask God to help us avoid sin and to bear fruit in keeping with repentance.*
- *Pray for strength to withstand temptations from the devil, the world, and our own flesh.*
- *Pray against the devil who wants to destroy our faith and create chaos, dissension, and bitterness in our congregation.*
- *Pray that our congregation would be marked by continual repentance from sin, faith in Christ, and love for one another.*
- *Pray that when we die God would “grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to Himself in heaven.”<sup>16</sup>*

Close by praying through the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> petitions of the Lord’s Prayer along with the items mentioned in the “springboard for further prayer” sections of this lesson. (Alternatively, you may use the Expanded Outline in appendix A.)

Homework: Pray through the Lord’s Prayer each day this week, expanding upon each petition as time allows and utilizing the “springboard for further prayer” sections to help you.

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<sup>16</sup> *Small Catechism* III 20.

### Lesson 3: The Lord's Prayer III

This lesson is very different from the first two. The first two lessons taught the meanings of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. This lesson has a more practical or hands-on approach. It will show you how to lead a prayer meeting based on the Lord's Prayer. The essential information from this lesson is summarized and organized into a template for leading prayer meetings based on the Lord's Prayer in Appendix A. When the time comes for you to lead a prayer meeting based on the Lord's Prayer, Appendix A, along with this lesson, will be good resources for you.

When you lead a prayer meeting based on the Lord's Prayer, you should help the participants expand upon each of the 7 petitions. David Garland put it well when he wrote that the Lord's Prayer should be "used as an outline that those who pray it may fill out with their own words."<sup>17</sup> You will help the members of a prayer meeting do this very thing.

There are 7 petitions in the Lord's Prayer along with an introduction. That makes 8 total elements. If your prayer group spends 5 minutes praying about each element it adds up to 40 minutes. That gives you 20 minutes for other things like singing and teaching (if you want to limit your prayer meeting to 60 minutes).

Before praying together, you (as the leader) should teach the participants the basic meaning of each petition of the Lord's Prayer. Your teaching time should last about 10-15 minutes. This is brief because the primary reason for your gathering is corporate prayer, not instruction. If you would like more time to teach, consider leading a Bible study on the Lord's Prayer one week before you gather for a prayer meeting.

To assist your teaching time, I encourage you to use some, but not all, of the material from the first two lessons of this course. I also encourage you to use the section on the Lord's Prayer in Luther's Small Catechism. Be thoughtful and selective about what you want to emphasize as you teach the group about the meaning of each petition. I encourage you to make handouts or a digital presentation to aid participants in their learning.

Another helpful resource for teaching is this thematic outline of the Lord's Prayer that I have adapted and modified from New Testament scholar, Charles L. Quarels<sup>18</sup>:

Intro: Thank God for adopting us as his children through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. Pray that God will get the glory and honor that he deserves.
2. Pray for God to rule over us and for more people to enter his kingdom.
3. Pray for help to do God's will and for the world to come more in line with God's will.
4. Pray for life's physical necessities.

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<sup>17</sup> Garland, *Luke*, 460.

<sup>18</sup> Charles L. Quarels, *Matthew*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 66.

5. Pray for personal forgiveness of sins and for help to forgive others.
6. Pray for victory over temptations to sin.
7. Pray for protection from all evil and from the devil.

Take time now to look at Appendix A to better understand the basic structure for leading a prayer meeting based on the Lord's Prayer. At this point, do not read through all the items found in the Expanded Outline at the end of Appendix A. Just glance at it.

Now that you've looked at Appendix A you have a good idea how to structure and lead a prayer meeting based on the Lord's Prayer. You noticed there are a couple spots for singing songs. You also noticed that a time of teaching precedes the time for corporate prayer. At the end of Appendix A, you saw the Expanded Outline. You should hand out a copy of the Expanded Outline to each participant at the prayer meeting or you should project it on a screen for all to see. This will guide the participants as they pray through each petition of the Lord's Prayer.

The Expanded Outline is taken, in part, from the "springboard for further prayer" sections found in lessons 1-2. I have also added other items under each petition that seem appropriate for a congregational prayer meeting. As the leader of the prayer meeting, you may edit the Expanded Outline as you deem fit. Add or subtract items. Change the wording. Do whatever you like to best suit the needs of your congregation's prayer meeting.

I also recommend leaving extra space under each petition in the Expanded Outline for prayer requests that come from the group. Before you pray together you should ask the participants if they have any prayer requests. These requests should then be prayed for under the appropriate petition in the Expanded Outline. For instance, a request for someone's health would fit naturally under the fourth petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." A request for someone's conversion would fit best under the second: "Thy kingdom come."

Before you take requests, I recommend that you tactfully tell the group something like this:

We want to spend as much time as possible praying about the kingdom priorities given to us by Jesus in the Lord's Prayer. Therefore, let's limit our health-related prayer requests to people in our congregation or their immediate family members. All of our requests are important to God, but we want to spend this brief time together focusing on the 7 themes our Lord has given us in this remarkable prayer.

If your group is small, you may not need to put forth this limitation. If your group is very large, it may be best to take prayer requests before the meeting even begins and then decide which ones are appropriate for the group.

When Luther wrote down his model prayers based on the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, he felt compelled to give the following qualification:

You need to know that I am not saying you should literally say all these words when you pray. That would just end up being a bunch of chattering, empty and idle babbling, as if you were just saying a bunch of words read out of a book or letters, much like how the laity use the Rosary, and the empty prayers of the clerics and monks. Instead, I am giving you these words as examples, so that your heart will be aroused to pray and instructed with the kind of thoughts that you should be thinking when you pray the Lord's Prayer. When the heart is warmed and ready to pray, these are the kinds of thoughts that will fill it, sometimes with many more words, or with fewer words.<sup>19</sup>

Luther's instruction applies equally well to the words found in the Expanded Outline. The items and the wording in that outline are a guide for us. Whether people happen to deviate from those words or repeat them verbatim is not our concern. No one should judge another person's sincerity when they pray to God. For many, praying out loud in a group setting is a very courageous step of faith!

As leader of the prayer meeting, you are responsible for helping the group progress through the Expanded Outline. You should allow for pauses to give people time to gather their thoughts or muster up their courage to pray. However, do not let too much silence linger before transitioning to the next section of the Expanded Outline. Be cognizant of the time constraints for the meeting.

*Look at Appendix A again and discuss:*

- *Which hymns or worship songs would be appropriate to select?*
- *What questions or comments do you have about the structure of the prayer meeting?*
- *How do you feel about teaching a group about the Lord's Prayer?*
- *What teaching aids would you use as you teach the group?*
- *Do you think the Expanded Outline will sufficiently help participants pray through the Lord's Prayer?*

Close today's lesson by praying through a portion of the Expanded Outline, as time allows.

Homework: Using Appendix A as a template, create an order of service for a prayer meeting that you could use in your congregation. Select songs. Plan how you would teach

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<sup>19</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 12-13.

participants about the Lord's Prayer. Prepare any teaching-aids that would be helpful for the group. Edit the Expanded Outline as you deem fit.

## Lesson 4: Praying the Psalms I

The goal for these last three lessons is to equip you to use the Psalms as a basis and guide for leading prayer meetings in your congregation. Before you learn how to lead a group praying through a psalm, however, you should learn how to do it yourself. This will be the focus of lessons 4 and 5. Lesson 6 will teach you how to lead a group through praying a psalm.

For these last three lessons I am relying heavily on a wonderful book by Donald S. Whitney entitled, *Praying the Bible*.<sup>20</sup> Whitney is a professor of biblical spirituality at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and has taught many students and congregations how to pray through the Bible and particularly through the Psalms.

To pray through a psalm simply read a verse or a phrase and then pause to pray about what you read. You may say the very same words back to God that you just read or you may pray simultaneously as you read. For instance, if you read Psalm 70:1, you may pray using those same words, “God, hurry to rescue me. LORD, hurry to help me!” Later in the psalm you might want to change the words to reflect your own personal request. For instance, you may read Psalm 70:4, “Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you” and then pray, “Lord, help me to seek you with all my heart. Help me to rejoice and be glad that you are my God and that I belong to you.” Whenever your prayer closely resembles the words and content of the psalm, I call it **direct appropriation**. This is the most basic method to pray through the Psalms.

This next method I call **indirect appropriation**. You may read a verse and then use it as a springboard to pray more expansively about your own specific needs. For instance, in Psalm 70:5 David writes, “I am oppressed and needy; hurry to me God. You are my help and my deliverer; LORD, do not delay.” After reading this you might ask God to deliver you from a difficult work environment caused by a rude and selfish coworker. In turn, this leads you to pray for the salvation of that coworker and that God would help you to love him and even share the gospel with him. This may not be what David had in mind as he wrote verse 5, but it is certainly good for you to pray about these matters. I like to use both direct and indirect appropriation as I pray through a psalm.

In his book, Whitney models how a person might pray through Psalm 23. Based on the initial phrase, “The LORD is my shepherd,” Whitney offers the following sample prayer:

Lord, I thank you that you *are* my shepherd. You’re a good shepherd. You have shepherded me all my life. And, great Shepherd, please shepherd my family today: guard them from the ways of the world; guide them into the ways of God. Lead them not into temptation; deliver them from evil. O great Shepherd, I pray for my children; cause them to be your sheep. May they love you as their shepherd, as I do. And Lord, please shepherd me in the decision that’s before me

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<sup>20</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

about my future. Do I make that move, that change, or not? I also pray for our under-shepherds at the church. Please shepherd them as they shepherd us.<sup>21</sup>

*Discuss:*

- *What sticks out to you as instructive from this example?*
- *What does Whitney include in his prayer that you might not have thought to pray about based on Psalm 23:1?*

In the example, Whitney prays for things that most Christians would likely pray about even if they weren't praying through a psalm. For instance, he prays for his family and for guidance about an upcoming decision. Since he is using Psalm 23:1 as a basis for his prayer, he lets the phrase, "The LORD is my shepherd," influence how he prays for his family and how he prays about his decision. Whitney shows how we can pray about the things we normally pray about while using the words of the psalm to guide and shape how we make those requests.

Next let's consider his model prayer based on the second half of Psalm 23:1, "I shall not want." Whitney prays:

Lord, I thank you that I've never really been in want. I haven't missed too many meals. All that I am and all that I have has come from you. But I know it pleases you that I bring my desires to you, so would you provide the finances that we need for those bills, for school, for that car?<sup>22</sup>

*Discuss: What sticks out to you from this brief example?*

At the beginning of both of his example prayers, Whitney begins with thanksgiving. In the first example he prayed, "Lord, I thank you that you *are* my shepherd." In the second, he prayed, "Lord, I thank you that I've never really been in want." He begins with thanksgiving before making specific requests.

In the second example notice how Whitney moves from the general phrase, "I shall not want," to praying about specific needs in his life (bills, school, car). The Psalms often make general statements or petitions that we can turn into particular requests that apply to our lives. Old Testament scholar Duane Garrett writes, "The fact that the Psalms...are non-specific is of great advantage to us readers. It allows us to read and pray the psalms in our situation and apply the words of the psalm to our needs, sorrows, and joys."<sup>23</sup> This is a great insight. Since David does not mention his specific enemies in the Psalms, like Goliath or Saul, it helps us to easily apply his statements to our own situations and our own enemies.

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<sup>21</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 29-30.

<sup>22</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Duane Garrett, *40 Days in 1 Samuel*, ed. William F. Cook III (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 6.

Now let's look at Whitney's example prayer based on Psalm 23:3a, "He restores my soul":

My Shepherd, I come to you so spiritually dry today. Please restore my soul; restore to me the joy of your salvation. And I pray you will restore the soul of that person from work/school/down the street with whom I'm hoping to share the gospel. Please restore his soul from darkness to light, from death to life.<sup>24</sup>

*Discuss: For whom does Whitney pray based on this phrase?*

Whitney encourages us to read a psalm slowly and thoughtfully, taking time after each verse or phrase to pray. He also says that it is all right to skip verses. Some verses may be hard to understand and therefore difficult to turn into prayer. We can skip them and move on to the next verse. Alternatively, some verses may be easy to understand but they don't prompt anything to pray about. Move on to the next verse. Pacing may also vary from time to time. The Lord may prompt you to pray for 10 minutes based on a single verse. The next day you may pray through twenty verses in 10 minutes. In either case, your prayers are guided by the Spirit-inspired word of God.

In the time remaining, use Psalm 25:1-11 as a guide for private, individual prayer. It's okay if you do not get through all 11 verses in the time allotted. It's also okay if you move past verse 11. When the time is up, come back together to share your experience with the group.

Before you begin, review what you've learned so far to help as you pray through Psalm 25:

- You may pray David's words back to God as your own (direct appropriation).
- You may use David's words as a springboard to pray about something else that comes to your mind (indirect appropriation).
- You may include the things you normally pray about (e.g., family, health, wisdom, and confession of sin) and allow David's words to influence how you pray about these things.
- Remember to give thanks to God.

Now you can split up to individually pray through Psalm 25:1-11. I recommend allowing 7-10 minutes for this exercise.

*Come back together and discuss:*

- *What was most beneficial about this exercise?*
- *What, if anything, was difficult or awkward about this exercise?*
- *What did you pray about that you do not normally pray about?*
- *How were some of your normal prayer requests shaped by Psalm 25?*
- *Were some verses or phrases difficult to turn into prayer?*

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<sup>24</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 31.

- *What might be the benefit of praying this way on a regular basis?*

Next week we will continue to learn and practice how to use the Psalms as a basis for prayer. But the most important thing is that you develop this practice in your own prayer life.

Homework: Throughout the week, practice praying through the Psalms each day. In his book, *Praying the Bible*, Donald Whitney suggests beginning with the following Psalms: 23, 27; 31; 37; 42; 66; 103; and 139. You don't have to get through all of them but try to do this for seven minutes each day (use a timer if necessary). Be prepared to share about your experience with the group next time we meet.

## Lesson 5: Praying the Psalms II

*Discuss: Share about your experience praying through the Psalms this past week.*

In chapter eight of *Praying the Bible*, Whitney shares some comments from people after their first experiences praying through the Psalms<sup>25</sup>:

- “My mind didn’t wander.”
- “My prayer was more about God and less about me.”
- “The time was too short!”
- “It seemed like a real conversation with a real Person.”
- “The psalm spoke directly to the life situation I am in right now.”
- “I thought more deeply about what the Bible says.”
- “I had greater assurance that I was praying God’s will.”
- “I prayed about things I normally don’t pray about.”
- “I prayed about the things I normally do pray about but in new and different ways.”
- “I didn’t say the same old things about the same old things.”

*Discuss: Which of these comments resonate most with you?*

Let’s review what we learned last week by quizzing each other:

- What is the direct appropriation method of praying through the Psalms?
- What is the indirect appropriation method?
- As we pray through a psalm, how can we include the things we normally pray about?

To aid our review, consider how we might use Psalm 64:1 as a basis for prayer. David wrote: “God, hear my voice when I am in anguish. Protect my life from the terror of the enemy.”

Direct appropriation: Pray these exact words back to God as your own prayer.

Indirect appropriation: Read 64:1 and pray, “God, I am in anguish about my poor relationship with my brother. Please help us to reconcile and be close to each other like we used to be. And Lord, please protect both of us from our chief enemy, the devil, who wants to keep us apart and divide us even further.”

You might also use Psalm 64:1 as the basis for how you pray for things you normally pray about: “Dear God, my grandma is in anguish as she endures chemotherapy and radiation treatments for cancer. Please heal her body and help her to grow closer to you through this hard time.” (Note: the word “anguish” from the Psalm was a springboard for the prayer about grandma, who is in “anguish.”)

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<sup>25</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 65-78.

All of these are valid ways to use Psalm 64:1 as a basis for prayer. Donald Whitney explains the method well:

If you are praying through a psalm, you simply read that psalm line by line, talking to God about whatever thoughts are prompted by the inspired words you read. If your mind wanders from the subject of the text, take those wandering thoughts Godward, then return to the text. If you come to a verse you don't understand, just skip it and go to the next verse. If you don't understand that one, move on. If you do understand it but nothing comes to mind to pray about, go to the next verse. If sinful thoughts enter in, pray about them and go on.<sup>26</sup>

Whitney says we should pray for whatever comes to mind as we pray through a psalm. Sometimes our thoughts may not be related to the content of the psalm at all. But since the Bible tells us that we may bring everything to God in prayer (Phil. 4:6) it is perfectly valid to pray about whatever comes to our minds. However, as he states above, after taking our wandering thoughts to God in prayer, it is good to return to the text to let our prayers be guided by God's word.

As you read and pray through the Psalms, eventually you will encounter what scholars call the imprecatory psalms or curse psalms. This is when the psalmist prays for God to punish and destroy his enemies. Some of them are especially violent and graphic in nature. The imprecatory psalms are 7, 35, 40, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 109, 137, 139, and 144. However, you will find imprecatory/curse elements in many more psalms than the ones just listed. Can we pray such psalms with a good conscience?

As Whitney said earlier, we don't have to pray about every verse we read in the Psalms. It is perfectly valid to skip a verse or several and move on until we find something that prompts us to pray. However, let's consider how we might pray based upon the many verses scattered throughout the Psalter in which the author calls on God to punish his enemies.

First, it is important to remember the theological basis for the imprecatory psalms. When God made his covenant with Abraham, it included this promise: "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse" (Gen 12:3a). Therefore, when David or another psalmist asked God to punish his enemies, he was asking God to keep his promise to Abraham.

It is also important to consider the original context of these psalms for God's people in the old covenant. The Israelites had real enemies who wanted to kill them and take the land God promised them. Often, their enemies succeeded. David even had enemies within Israel who wanted him dead. Much after David's time, the Israelite exiles in Babylon were ridiculed and mocked by their captors (see Psalm 137). In response, they asked God to punish their captors and restore them to the Promised Land.

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<sup>26</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 38.

Since the coming of Christ, the situation for God's people has changed. Christians today are under the new covenant in which God's promise to bless his people is not tied to the land of Israel but looks forward to "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). This means that the nature of our enemies and the battles we fight are different now than in Old Testament times when God's people were promised a specific chunk of land as their own.

Furthermore, most of us have not experienced threats to our lives like David and the other psalmists. However, there are many Christians today who face terrible persecution. There is a place for asking God to punish these wicked people who will not repent. Revelation 6:10 includes one such prayer made by the souls of martyrs who were killed for following Christ. They prayed, "Lord, the one who is holy and true, how long until you judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood?" They were told to rest and wait a little longer. Like these martyrs, we are waiting for Judgment Day when God will make all things right. We can pray for God to hasten this Day to punish the wicked and to vindicate all those who suffer for following Christ.

When we pray this way, we take vengeance and punishment out of our imperfect hands and place them in the perfect hands of God, who judges justly. In Rom. 12:19 Paul writes, "Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God's wrath, because it is written, 'Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay,' says the Lord."

Some Christians may choose not to pray the imprecatory psalms against any specific people but rather against their own sin and against the devil. This is a good practice. If we do pray them against specific people, it may be appropriate to ask God to bring them to repentance, but to punish them if they will not repent. We should remember Luther's prayer based on the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer:

Forgive all our enemies, and anyone who would want to harm us or do us injustice, as we forgive them, from the heart. They are doing themselves the greatest harm; we are not helped by their destruction, and would much rather see them saved, with us. Amen.<sup>27</sup>

If imprecatory psalms are prayed in a group setting, it would be helpful to highlight the plight of certain Christians (e.g., in Afghanistan, Somalia, or Nigeria) who are persecuted for their faith and to offer prayers on their behalf. Information about the persecuted church can readily be found from organizations like Open Doors USA or Voice of the Martyrs.

*Discuss:*

- *What do you think about praying through the imprecatory psalms?*
- *How are Christians in our country persecuted for following Christ?*
- *Are you ready to pray through the Psalms as a group?*

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<sup>27</sup> Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 11.

Closing Group Activity—Pray through Psalm 103:

- Spend 5 minutes silently reading and reflecting on the psalm.
- Spend 10 minutes praying through Psalm 103 as a group, taking turns saying short prayers based on the various verses. Use direct and indirect appropriation.
- *Note: You do not have to get through the entire psalm.*
- *Note: In some parts of this psalm, it is best not to pause for prayer after each verse but after each thought is completed (vv. 8-12, vv. 15-16, vv. 17-18, and vv. 20-22 go well together).*

Homework: Continue your daily practice of praying through a psalm for 7 minutes a day. You may choose your own psalms or select from the following: 1, 17, 64, 112, 145, and portions of 119. For a challenge, pray through Psalm 109, an imprecatory psalm.

Homework for the leader of this study: Read Lesson 6 ahead of time and make sure you have prepared and curated Psalm 37 for the group prayer time at the end of that lesson.

## Lesson 6: Praying the Psalms III

Like lesson 3, this lesson has a more practical focus. It will show you how to lead a prayer meeting based on a psalm. This lesson should be used in conjunction with Appendix B: Prayer Meeting Template Based on a Psalm.

At the end of *Praying the Bible*, Whitney has a section dedicated to praying the Bible with a group.<sup>28</sup> Whitney begins with some advice learned from experience: “Don’t try to lead a group to pray through a passage of Scripture until after the members have at least one experience in praying the Bible individually. Once they have an idea of what it’s like to pray through a section of Scripture on their own, it’s a lot easier for them to do so with others.”<sup>29</sup>

This means you should begin by teaching the group how to pray through a psalm and by modeling how to do so. Most of the material for teaching the group will come from lesson 4 of this course, though you may want to include some things from lesson 5. After teaching how to do it, give them 7-10 minutes to pray through a psalm on their own. Pick a psalm for them: 23; 25:1-11; 27; 31; or 32 would all be great to begin with. When they are done, ask them to share their experience with the group and give feedback on how it went. This will encourage the participants.

Taking time to teach the group how to pray through a psalm and then giving them time to practice themselves will take up most of the time during the first prayer meeting. Unfortunately, you will not have as much time for praying through a psalm all together. However, this is better than putting group members on the spot to pray through a psalm in a group setting without really knowing how to do it or what to say. That would be discouraging and even embarrassing to some people. Hopefully, this will not be your only prayer meeting. The next time you meet for prayer the participants will have experience and be prepared to pray through a psalm together.

Even so, I think you can still pray through a brief psalm together at your first meeting after everyone has practiced doing it themselves. And you, as the prayer leader, will help them do this in the most simple and effective manner. Whitney has described a terrific way to lead the group and I will repeat his advice here. I will add some of my own thoughts, as well. Here’s how to lead a group through praying a psalm together.

First, read the psalm together as a group.

Second, Whitney tells the prayer leader:

Call out, one at a time as needed, the verses or phrases from the psalm that you find most conducive to prayer. You simply pick verses easy to understand and

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<sup>28</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 93-96.

<sup>29</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 93.

which most anyone could pray from and pass over those verses that might be too difficult for some in your group.<sup>30</sup>

This requires that you prepare ahead of time by marking the verses or phrases in the psalm that will be most conducive to group prayer. Lead the prayer time by reading out loud certain verses or phrases from the psalm and then giving the group time to pray about them. Go through the psalm sequentially, but skip certain verses or phrases because they might be difficult for people to pray about.

Whitney gives an example of leading a group through Psalm 37. As you lead, call out phrases such as what David wrote in 37:3a, “Trust in the LORD and do what is good.” After reading this out loud, give time for people in the group to pray out loud based on this phrase. When it appears that no one else will pray, select another phrase to read out loud. You may wish to skip over 37:3b and read verse 4 out loud, which seems very conducive for group prayer, “Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires.” Continue this pattern, reading some phrases out loud but skipping others. One good verse to skip would be verse 35: “I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree” (ESV). Even your pastor would have a difficult time knowing what to say after this verse!

The main benefit of praying through a psalm as a group is that your prayers will be guided and shaped by the word of God. He will set the agenda for your prayer meeting. Whitney also praises this method because it prevents us from saying the same old things about the same old things when we pray. Instead, our prayers will reflect the Holy Spirit-inspired words of Scripture! We will often pray for things that we would not have prayed for otherwise. For example, if the group prays through Psalm 66, the participants will spend more time praying for the whole earth to praise and worship God than they have in a very long time, perhaps ever (see verses 1-4). Furthermore, praying these verses will help our hearts to become more aligned with the heart of God, who wants all the earth to worship Him.

When leading a group to pray through a psalm, how should we include prayer requests from the group? I suggest taking prayer requests before the group begins praying and writing them down somewhere where everyone can see. Encourage the group to incorporate these requests into their prayers as they pray through the psalm. Whitney gives an example of how to incorporate prayer requests for Josh, who lost his job, and for Jessica, who is scheduled to have surgery, as the group prays through Psalm 37. When the group comes to Psalm 37:3 (“Trust in the LORD and do what is good”), Whitney explains,

Someone prays that Josh would ‘trust in the Lord’ as he looks for a job. Another prays that Josh would ‘do good’ for the sake of the kingdom as he is waiting. Someone else prays that Jessica would ‘trust in the Lord’ in the face of an

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<sup>30</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 95.

uncertain outcome from the surgery. A fourth person prays that the church would ‘do good’ in terms of ministering to both Josh and Jessica during this difficult time.<sup>31</sup>

This example shows that the group can use the language and content of the psalm to pray for the requests that are brought before the group. So instead of taking additional time to pray for the various requests, the group can weave them in as they pray through the psalm.

In lesson 4 you learned about direct and indirect appropriation of the verses as you pray through a psalm. As you teach the group about indirect appropriation, emphasize how it is good to pray for *whatever* the Lord brings to our minds as we read through his word. **Give them permission to pray for things that are not necessarily related to the content of the psalm.** As the group leader, you can always bring the focus of the prayers back to God’s word when appropriate. But my concern here is that everyone in the group feels comfortable to pray out loud. We don’t want anyone to remain silent because they’re afraid they will say something that does not reflect a proper interpretation of the Bible.

The first time I led a group praying through God’s word I did not emphasize this point enough. When I modeled how to pray, my prayers were clearly based on my thoughtful interpretation of the text in its original context. I included no tangential thoughts or applications. When it came time for the group to pray, most people remained silent. The only ones who prayed out loud were those who were generally skilled in interpreting the Bible. The others, I’m sure, were afraid to say something that might be out of line! This is because I didn’t give them permission to pray for *whatever* came to their minds as they read through God’s word.

Of course, we want our prayers to reflect the true meaning of the Biblical text. And by and large, I think this will happen as the group prays through a psalm. But we also recognize that it is quite all right to bring anything to the Lord in prayer (see Phil 4:6), and so we don’t want to make people too shy or afraid to pray out loud.

Now look at Appendix B, which is a template for leading a prayer meeting based on a psalm.

*Discuss Appendix B:*

- *What do you notice about the structure of this prayer meeting template?*
- *How would you approach teaching the group how to pray through a psalm? What teaching-aids might be helpful for the group?*

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<sup>31</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 96.

Group Activity: For 10-15 minutes, pray through Psalm 37 together using the group prayer method described above. The leader of this course should have already curated this psalm to help your group focus on the verses most conducive to prayer.

Homework: Using Appendix B as a guide, prepare an order of service for a prayer meeting based on a psalm. Curate the psalm ahead of time so your group can focus on the verses most conducive to corporate prayer. Prepare any teaching-aids that would help the group learn how to pray through a psalm.

### **Conclusion**

Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.”

*Discuss:*

- *When should we have our congregation’s first prayer meeting?*
- *Who will take the lead for this first prayer meeting?*
- *How can we help our congregation see the value of meeting together for prayer?*

To quote the patriarch Jacob, “Why do you keep looking at each other?” (Gen 42:1). Go lead a prayer meeting!

## Appendix A: Prayer Meeting Template Based on The Lord's Prayer

Call to Prayer: "Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>9</sup> Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup> 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)

Sing a hymn or worship song.

Teach about the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer:

Intro: "Our Father, who art in heaven"

1. "Hallowed be Thy Name"
2. "Thy Kingdom come"
3. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven"
4. "Give us this day our daily bread"
5. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"
6. "Lead us not into temptation"
7. "But deliver us from evil."

See also the following thematic outline of the Lord's Prayer:

Intro: Thank God for adopting us as his children through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. Pray that God will get the glory and honor that he deserves.
2. Pray for God to rule over us and for more people to enter his kingdom.
3. Pray for help to do God's will and for the world to come more in line with God's will.
4. Pray for life's physical necessities.
5. Pray for personal forgiveness of sins and for help to forgive others.
6. Pray for victory over temptations to sin.
7. Pray for protection from all evil and from the devil.

Hand out the Expanded Outline to each person.

Take prayer requests and write them under the appropriate petitions in the Expanded Outline.

Using the Expanded Outline, pray through the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer as a group.

Sing a hymn or worship song.

Close with The Lord's Prayer.

## Expanded Outline

Intro: “Our Father, who art in heaven”

- Thank God for adopting us as his children through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Ask God to give us bold faith and confidence that He will hear and answer our prayers.

1<sup>st</sup> Petition: “Hallowed be Thy name”

- Pray for our congregation to praise, honor, and extol God’s name.
- Pray for all people to praise, honor, and extol God’s name.
- Pray that we, as God’s children, would lead holy lives as we represent God to the world.
- Pray that God’s word would spread abroad and be taught in its truth and purity.
- Pray for our pastor(s) as he preaches and teaches God’s word.

2<sup>nd</sup> Petition: “Thy kingdom come”

- Pray for King Jesus to return from heaven and make all things new.
- Pray for more people to enter God’s kingdom through faith in Christ today.
- Pray that we would gladly submit to God’s rule over our lives.
- Pray for spiritual renewal and repentance in our congregation.
- Pray that God would prevent the devil from gaining ground.
- Pray for the missionaries we support.
- Pray for the church plant(s) we support.
- Pray for our congregation’s ministry to children.
- Pray for our congregation’s outreach to the community.
- Pray for those who have strayed from our congregation and from God.

3<sup>rd</sup> Petition: “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven”

- Pray for God to destroy every evil counsel and purpose of the devil, the world, and our own flesh.
- Pray for strength to walk according to God’s will, to keep his commands.
- Pray that our congregation would grow in our love for God and for our neighbors.
- Pray for the world to come more in line with God’s will.
- Pray for strength to endure suffering & trials with steadfastness and faith.
- Pray for wisdom for those who lead our congregation.
- Pray for wisdom about upcoming decisions our congregation will make.

4<sup>th</sup> Petition: “Give us this day our daily bread”

- Thank God for providing our congregation with all that we need.
- Ask God to provide our congregation with certain specific needs.
- Pray for contentment with what God has given us.
- Pray for the well-being of our community and nation.
- Pray for the leaders of our community and nation.
- Pray for our congregation’s ministry of mercy to help those in physical need.
- Pray for strong and godly marriages and families in our congregation.
- For the specific health needs for people in our congregation.
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5<sup>th</sup> Petition: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”

- Pray for God to give us humble and tender consciences so that we will sincerely confess our sins.
- Thank God for his mercy and grace through his Son, Jesus Christ.
- Pray that God will help us to forgive, from the heart, those who sin against us.
- Pray for reconciliation among brothers and sisters in our congregation.
- *Spend time silently confessing sins and asking for forgiveness.*

6<sup>th</sup> Petition: “Lead us not into temptation”

- Ask God to help us avoid sin and to bear fruit in keeping with repentance.
- Pray for strength to withstand temptations from the devil, the world, and our own flesh.
- Pray against the devil who wants to destroy our faith and to wreak havoc, dissension, and chaos in our congregation.
- Pray that our congregation would be marked by continual repentance from sin, faith in Christ, and love for one another.
- Pray for those in our congregation who may be struggling with habitual or even unrepentant sin. (*This is not the time to pray for anyone by name, unless perhaps someone’s sin has become manifest and is publicly known.*)
- Pray for our pastor and leaders to live godly lives and to lead with integrity.

7<sup>th</sup> Petition: “But deliver us from evil.”

- Pray against the devil, who wants to destroy our faith and wreak havoc in our congregation.
- Pray for unity in our congregation and brotherly love to prevail.

- Pray for help to restore those caught in transgressions in a spirit of gentleness (Gal. 6:1).
- Pray that when we die God would “grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to Himself in heaven” (Small Catechism).

## **Appendix B: Prayer Meeting Template Based on a Psalm**

Call to Prayer: “Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:16-17)

Sing a hymn or worship song.

Teach how to pray through a psalm:

- Explain what it means to pray through a psalm.
- Explain direct appropriation and give an example.
- Explain indirect appropriation (springboard) and give an example.
- Teach how to move from general statements in the Psalms to prayer about specific situations in our own lives.
- Give the group permission to pray about whatever comes to their minds as they read the psalm.
- Model praying through portions of Psalm 23 (See Whitney’s examples from Lesson 4).
- Explain how to include the things we normally pray for.
- Teach the benefits of praying through a psalm (See the comments at the beginning of lesson 5).

Take 7-10 minutes to pray through Psalm 25:1-11 individually. Give everyone a handout with the following information (or use a projector):

- Pray David’s words back to God as your own (direct appropriation).
- Use David’s words as a springboard to pray about something else that comes to your mind (indirect appropriation).
- Include the things you normally pray about (e.g., family, health, wisdom, and confession of sin) and allow David’s words to influence how you pray about these things.
- Give thanks to God.

Come back together for people to share their experience with one another.

Take prayer requests and discuss how to incorporate them into the Psalm.

Pray through Psalm 27 (or another psalm) together.

Sing a hymn or worship song.

Conclude with the Lord’s Prayer.

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## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING THE LEADERS OF SKREFSRUD LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BERESFORD, SOUTH DAKOTA, TO LEAD PRAYER MEETINGS BASED ON THE LORD'S PRAYER AND THE PSALMS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022  
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The purpose of this project was to strengthen the spiritual life of Skrefsrud Lutheran Church (SLC) in Beresford, South Dakota, by equipping its leaders to lead prayer meetings based upon the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms. Chapter 1 presents the ministry context of SLC and the goals for this project. Chapter 2 gives a biblical foundation for the importance of corporate prayer. This is achieved through an exposition of Luke 11:1-13, 1 Timothy 2:1-8, and James 5:13-18. Chapter 3 surveys the practice of corporate prayer in the early church and during the Reformation. Chapter 3 also surveys various contemporary methods for conducting prayer meetings. Chapter 4 describes the project's implementation and gives a summary of the curriculum created for this project. Chapter 5 concludes with an evaluation of this project along with guidance for those who wish to utilize this research to lead prayer meetings in their own ministry contexts.

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