



Going Against the Flow

Summary and Goal

As Jesus neared the end of the Sermon on the Mount, He encouraged persistence in praying to the Father, gave us the Golden Rule, and then gave the first of four comparisons that illustrated choosing the way of life through the narrow gate.

Main Passages

Matthew 7:7-14

Session Outline

1. You Must Ask (Matt. 7:7)
2. You Will Be Answered (Matt. 7:8-11)
3. Pray Also for Them (Matt. 7:12-14)

Theological Theme

The theological theme of this passage is the believer's position before the Father on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross. These activities described in this passage are of those whose hearts are turned toward Christ, who have found and stay on the narrow way.

Christ Connection

The saving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ clears the way for a person to have access to and take hold of these commands.

Missional Application

A Christian's prayer life should be characterized by intercession for those who have yet to hear the gospel, don't have a Bible in their language, and who have no born-again believers living among them.

Historical Context of Matthew

Purpose

Matthew probably wrote his Gospel in order to preserve written eyewitness testimony about the ministry of Jesus. Matthew's Gospel emphasizes certain theological truths. First, Jesus is the Messiah, the long-awaited King of God's people. Second, Jesus is the new Abraham, the founder of a new spiritual Israel consisting of all people who choose to follow him. This new Israel will consist of both Jews and Gentiles. Third, Jesus is the new Moses, the deliverer and instructor of God's people. Fourth, Jesus is the Immanuel, the virgin-born Son of God who fulfills the promises of the OT.

Author

The author did not identify himself in the text. However, the title that ascribes this Gospel to Matthew appears in the earliest manuscripts and is possibly original. Titles became necessary to distinguish one Gospel from another when the four Gospels began to circulate as a single collection. Many early church fathers (Papias, Irenaeus, Pantaeus, and Origen) acknowledged Matthew as the author. Papias also contended that Matthew first wrote in Hebrew, implying that this Gospel was later translated into Greek.

Setting

Determining the date of composition of Matthew's Gospel depends largely on the relationship of the Gospels to one another. Most scholars believe that Matthew utilized Mark's Gospel in writing his own gospel. If this is correct, Matthew's Gospel must postdate Mark's. However, the date of Mark's Gospel is also shrouded in mystery. Irenaeus (ca AD 180) seems to claim that Mark wrote his Gospel after Peter's death in the mid-60s. However, Clement of Alexandria, who wrote only twenty years after Irenaeus, claimed that Mark wrote his Gospel while Peter was still alive. Given the ambiguity of the historical evidence, a decision must be based on other factors.

Special Features

This Gospel was written from a strong Jewish perspective to show that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

8

Session Plan

Going Against the Flow

Introduction

- ❓ What do you know about prayer? What comes to mind when you hear the word prayer?
- ❓ Is prayer a regular part of your life? What helps or hinders your prayer life?

It is fitting that Jesus would teach about prayer and service to others in a sermon directed towards those who loved and trusted Him. Further, it makes sense that these would be so closely linked to the life of a believer on the narrow way. Christians come to God through prayer, and they come to God in prayer on behalf of those around them. In our lesson today we will reflect upon various aspects of Christian prayer and how prayer isn't meant only to bring our own needs to God, but to serve others in prayer. This is life on the narrow way as referenced by Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14.

1. You Must Ask (Matt. 7:7)

Jesus taught His disciples that they ought not to shrink away from prayer. In fact, He commanded it. There is no doubt that children of God fear God, but this isn't the sort of fear that causes one to avoid contact or interaction. Rather, love and reverence comprise the sort of fear that Christians ought to have for God. This good and fitting fear draws God's children toward Him, instead of driving them away. The way that Christians approach God is in Christ through prayer.

- ❓ What kind of praying did Jesus command of His followers? What was implied about their approach from the description of prayer in this verse?
- ❓ What is a suitable petition for a child of God? For what should a Christian pray or not pray?
- ❓ Application: In your experience with prayer, have you approached God by trusting in the finished work of Jesus or in something else? Why is it important to first trust in Christ before being able to pray in this way?

2. You Will Be Answered (Matt. 7:8-11)

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith in this way: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” The sort of faith that the Bible describes is different than the common use of the word in the English language today. We often associate faith with the idea of having a positive outlook and an optimistic expectation about what will happen. Biblical faith is different. The Christian’s faith is firmly grounded in God Himself. Christian faith doesn’t rest on their ability to make something happen, but in the person and character of the one true and living God. Christian faith is as certain as the rising sun because the object of Christian faith, God, is as certain as the rising sun.

- ❓ Does this mean that if Christians pray in faith, then they can expect results? Will God always answer Christians? Why is it necessary to pray with faith?
- ❓ Does Christian faith force God to give His people what they ask for? Is God obligated to always say yes to the petition if a person has sufficient faith?
- ❓ Application: When you pray is your heart submitted to God’s authority and ready to receive with joy whatever answer He gives? Or do you become angry if God doesn’t answer your prayers as you think that He should?

3. Pray Also for Them (Matt. 7:12-14)

Jesus commanded His followers, “Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (v. 12). In light of the immediate context, we may very well think of it like this: Therefore, whatever you want others to pray for you, pray also the same for them.

- ❓ Why is prayer helpful and effective as a way to serve others?
- ❓ What if someone doesn’t desire prayer? What if they don’t see the value in it? Should Christians still pray for them?
- ❓ Application: How have you seen prayer as a way to serve others and treat them the way you want to be treated? How have you been saved by the prayers of others?

Conclusion

- ❓ What does your prayer life reveal about your dependence upon God?
- ❓ How might praying for others provide opportunity for Christians to have gospel conversations with them?

❓ For Further Discussion

What does Christ’s work on the cross have to do with prayer? Why does it matter? How is prayer related to a Christian’s relationship with God?



Expanded Session Content

Going Against the Flow

Introduction

- ❓ What do you know about prayer? What comes to mind when you hear the word prayer?
- ❓ Is prayer a regular part of your life? What helps or hinders your prayer life?

What a wonderful thing that Christians are commanded to pray and serve others. In fact, one of the greatest ways a Christian can serve others is by praying for them. Jesus Christ obligated those who trusted in Him to boldly petition the Father. Of course, they come to the Father through Christ and stand before Him guiltless because Jesus took on their guilt. Some may think of the commands of God as drudgery. They may even see this command as a burdensome duty to shoulder. Christians need a different perspective. John Piper can help us recapture the essence of prayer. He said:

“Is intentional, regular, disciplined, earnest, Christ-dependent, God-glorifying, joyful prayer a duty, a discipline? Do I go to prayer meetings Tuesday morning, Wednesday afternoon, Friday morning, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday morning because it’s a duty, out of discipline? You could call it that.

It’s a duty the way it’s a duty for a scuba diver to put on his air tank before he goes underwater.

It’s a duty the way pilots should listen to air-traffic controllers.

It’s a duty the way soldiers in combat should clean their rifles and load their guns.

It’s a duty the way hungry people eat food.

It’s a duty the way thirsty people drink water.

It’s a duty the way a deaf man puts on his hearing aid.

It’s a duty the way a diabetic takes his insulin.

It’s a duty the way Winnie the Pooh looks for honey.

It’s a duty the way pirates look for gold.

So, you could call it duty if you want.”

As we study this passage today, let's remember that for the Christian prayer, is the direct line to their Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and God. For the Christian, to live and breathe is to pray. Further, Christians should serve others by praying for them. This is what life on the narrow way (7:13-14) looks like: laboring in prayer on behalf of others. The narrow way is a life of dependence upon God and service to others.

Session Summary

It is fitting that Jesus would teach about prayer and service to others in a sermon directed towards those who loved and trusted Him. Further, it makes sense that these would be so closely linked to the life of a believer on the narrow way. Christians come to God through prayer, and they come to God in prayer on behalf of those around them. In our lesson today we will reflect upon various aspects of Christian prayer and how prayer isn't meant only to bring our own needs to God, but to serve others in prayer. This is life on the narrow way as referenced by Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14.

1. You Must Ask (Matt. 7:7)


Jesus taught His disciples that they ought not to shrink away from prayer. In fact, He commanded it. There is no doubt that children of God fear God, but this isn't the sort of fear that causes one to avoid contact or interaction. Rather, love and reverence comprise the sort of fear that Christians ought to have for God. This good and fitting fear draws God's children toward Him, instead of driving them away. The way that Christians approach God is in Christ through prayer.

- ❓ What kind of praying did Jesus command of His followers? What was implied about their approach from the description of prayer in this verse?


Jesus directly stated that Christians must boldly ask their Father. Christians ought to expect God's ready response when they come before Him with their petitions. This is true when they are bringing their own needs before Him, but it is also true when they intercede and petition on behalf of others. It is a great privilege and power when Christians utilize their position in Christ to seek the good of others. Christians are a blessing to those around them when they bring their needs boldly to the Father.

It is important to understand why Christians can come before God boldly in prayer. Hebrews 4:14-16 is useful as we rightly understand Christian boldness before the Father. This passage (indeed, the whole book) expresses the all-important doctrine of mediation. Jesus Christ is the great High Priest who has come before God on the Christian's behalf to make

atonement for their sin. Now that Jesus' righteousness is credited to the Christian's account, they also have the privilege to approach the throne. Christians can do so boldly because of the nature of the mediation. Jesus' sacrifice was the perfect and final atoning sacrifice. Christian boldness isn't based on anything inherent in them, but in the sufficiency of Jesus' sacrifice. This boldness isn't mingled with pride or self-justification. Rather, this boldness rests fully and firmly in the completed work of Christ on the cross on the Christian's behalf.


 What is a suitable petition for a child of God? For what should a Christian pray or not pray?

The Bible gives no list of items that are prohibited from the realm of prayer. What the Scriptures do make clear is the fact that Christians should be bold, confident, and humble when approaching God in petition. Nothing is off-limits. Christians are to cast all of their cares on Him, no matter how small or embarrassing. They are to ask for great things, for nothing is too great for God.

 Application: In your experience with prayer, have you approached God by trusting in the finished work of Jesus or in something else? Why is it important to first trust in Christ before being able to pray in this way?

2. You Will Be Answered (Matt. 7:8-11)


Hebrews 11:1 defines faith in this way: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." The sort of faith that the Bible describes is different than the common use of the word in the English language today. We often associate faith with the idea of having a positive outlook and an optimistic expectation about what will happen. Biblical faith is different. The Christian's faith is firmly grounded in God Himself. Christian faith doesn't rest on their ability to make something happen, but in the person and character of the one true and living God. Christian faith is as certain as the rising sun because the object of Christian faith, God, is as certain as the rising sun.

 Does this mean that if Christians pray in faith, then they can expect results? Will God always answer Christians? Why is it necessary to pray with faith?

When a child of God prays with faith to his or her heavenly Father, results are certain. But Christians must be careful not to impose upon God their will by demanding that the results He brings about match their expectations. God may very well answer no, but it is certain that He hears Christians and answers them.


James 1:5-8 is helpful with this question. James wrote, “If any 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. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

James wrote specifically in regard to obtaining wisdom in these verses, but there is a principle that can be applied to all petitions. Christians should ask in faith, not doubt. The key here is to understand that James was talking about the idea that Christians should immediately repent of doubting the ability and promises of God. He was not saying that Christians should never doubt or question their own motives, hearts, or interpretations. The promises and character of God that are made clear in Scripture are never to be doubted. But people are prone to misunderstandings and self-deception. So, it is good to doubt ourselves as we enter into prayer.

 Does Christian faith force God to give His people what they ask for? Is God obligated to always say yes to the petition if a person has sufficient faith?

God will do what is good and right always, but we don't always ask for what is good and right. It is, however, pleasing to God when Christians approach Him with faith. Christians don't attempt to wield faith as a weapon to hold God hostage until He gives them what they want. Rather, they approach God with faith because of who He is and what He has done in their lives. In other words, faith is the good and fitting posture for the redeemed as they approach God in prayer.

In fact, verses 9-11 clarify that God will only give His children good gifts. We need to let that truth sink in. God will not give His children evil gifts if they ask for good gifts. Furthermore, God will not give His children evil gifts, even if they ask for evil gifts. Moreover, God determines what is a good gift and what is an evil gift. What we ask for, thinking that it is a good gift, may actually be an evil gift. And, what we think is an evil gift, may actually be a good gift. God has the wisdom to see these things and can be trusted.

 Application: When you pray is your heart submitted to God's authority and ready to receive with joy whatever answer He gives? Or do you become angry if God doesn't answer your prayers as you think that He should?

The Narrow Road

The narrow gate symbolizes the exclusive nature of Christ's kingdom. Entrance requires the disciple to do the will of the Father in heaven (v. 21). The gate that is wide indicates that hell grants unrestricted entrance and that many will enter through its gates. The difficult (lit "narrow") . . . road may symbolize the life of hardship and persecution that the disciple must face. However, since Jewish literature often used the symbol of the road to represent a moral path (Jdg 2:22; Is 30:21; Jr 6:16; 2Jn 6) and because the law was portrayed as a narrow road from which a person was not to deviate (Dt 5:32; 17:20; 28:14; Jos 1:7; 2Kg 22:2), the narrow road probably represents Jesus's morally restrictive teaching. The wide road permits travelers to meander and pursue worldly desires, but the narrow path requires travelers to stick to God's will (Mt 7:21).

3. Pray Also for Them (Matt. 7:12-14)

When Jesus spoke of the "narrow gate," He was referring to the exclusive nature of His kingdom. There aren't multiple ways to eternal life. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). The gate is considered narrow because there is only one path to eternal life. On the other hand, the wide gate that leads to hell is wide. The symbolism here suggests an unrestricted entrance that many will enter.

Christians go against the flow. Their lives look differently than the lives of people who have not submitted their lives to the one true and living God. These two paths are illustrated in Jesus' picture of the narrow gate and the wide gate. One of the ways that Christian lives look different is their praying. Prayer is foolishness to an unbelieving world. It is idiocy to someone who believes that the material is all that exists. If prayer is foolishness, then praying for others is lunacy. Christians are never more counter-cultural than when they are in their prayer closets pleading to their heavenly Father that He would save the soul of their neighbor, coworker, teacher, spouse, boss, child, or enemy.

Jesus commanded His followers, "Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (v. 12). In light of the immediate context, we may very well think of it like this: Therefore, whatever you want others to pray for you, pray also the same for them.



Why is prayer helpful and effective as a way to serve others?

Prayer is effectual because the one to whom Christians pray is powerful. When a person approaches the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the name of Christ, then they have real access to the being that spoke creation into existence and split the Red Sea. Christians should highly value and esteem prayer and their petitions being brought before God. They should desire that other Christians pray for them. They should covet prayers. This is why the "Golden Rule" applies to prayer, perhaps more than any other activity. Just as Christians desire that others would pray on their behalf, they should pray for others.



What if someone doesn't desire prayer? What if they don't see the value in it? Should Christians still pray for them?

Just because a person doesn't see the value in prayer doesn't mean that the usefulness and benefit of it is negated. Christians pray for others not because they are trying to please others, but because they know that it is one of the most loving and helpful things they can do for another. When

Christians pray for someone who doesn't ask for it or even desire it, they reflect the character and goodness of their heavenly Father who gives good gifts to His children even when they desire evil gifts.

- Application: How have you seen prayer as a way to serve others and treat them the way you want to be treated?
How have you been saved by the prayers of others?

Conclusion

Christians go against the flow of the world around them. They walk along the narrow way that leads to life because they have heard the gospel call and responded with faith and repentance. Their hearts are oriented toward their Maker, and their desire is to obey Him. Two distinctives of those who are travelling toward the narrow gate are a life marked with prayer and acts of service toward others. These two work hand-in-hand as Christians labor in their private times of prayer to intercede for others.

- What does your prayer life reveal about your dependence upon God?
- What does Christ's work on the cross have to do with prayer? Why does it matter? How is prayer related to a Christian's relationship with God?
- How might praying for others provide opportunity for Christians to have gospel conversations with them?

Prayer of Response

Ask God to make you a person of desperate dependence upon Him. Ask Him to teach you to pray without ceasing. Ask Him to help you to feel your need for His work in your life.

Additional Resources

- *Prayer* by Timothy Keller
- *Praying with Paul* by D.A. Carson
- *Praying the Bible* by Donald Whitney

For Next Week

Session Title

- What is Your Foundation?

Main Passages

- Matthew 7:15-28

Session Outline

1. Be On Guard (Matt. 7:15)
2. Watch the Fruit (Matt. 7:16-23)
3. Build on God's Word (Matt. 7:24-29)

Memorize

⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

- Matthew 7:7-8

Daily Readings

- Monday - Proverbs 3:5-6
- Tuesday - Psalm 20:7
- Wednesday - Isaiah 26:3
- Thursday - Psalm 56:4
- Friday - Hebrews 4:12
- Saturday - 2 Timothy 3:15-17

Extended Commentary

Matthew 7:7-14

7:7-8. The principle of persistent reliance on the Father as loving provider certainly applies to all these “good things.” But Jesus probably had the disciples’ temporal needs in mind. This is the simplest, most obvious meaning, and it would further underscore Jesus’ teaching against anxiety over daily needs (6:25-34). This is Jesus’ third of four “final exhortations” (7:1-12), addressing possible misconceptions people might take away from the sermon.

Verses 7 and 8 have six symmetrically arranged verbs paired first in a triplet of commands (7:7) and then in a triplet of affirmations (7:8). There is no need to try to distinguish different kinds of activity between ask, seek, and knock. Jesus was probably using the three verbs to refer to the same activity of petitioning the Father. His use of three different verbs added emphasis to his message. This three-pronged approach, together with the fact that all three verbs are in the present tense, conveys a clear picture of persistence in prayer.

The other three verbs in 7:7 (will be given, will find, and will be opened) are in the future tense, while in 7:8 receives and finds are in the present tense, and will be opened is in the future.

With these tenses in mind, we could translate 7:7-8 as, “Keep on asking, and it will be given to you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking will continually receive, and he who keeps on seeking will continually find, and to him who keeps on knocking it will be opened.”

Some other passages on prayer (e.g., Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 14:13-14; 15:7), emphasize the manner in which the human activity is to be conducted. Here the emphasis is on the generosity and faithfulness of the Father. There is no condition placed on the promises (as “if you believe” in 21:22). James 4:2-3 gives some reasons why prayer sometimes does not “work.” Other passages that teach persistence in prayer are Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8.

7:9-11. Verses 9 and 10 are rhetorical questions, implying that no parent would pull such tricks on their sincere children. A stone can resemble a loaf of “bread” (4:3), and some “snakes” can resemble “fish.”

In my experience as a pastor, I have come across several people who have a deeply rooted impression of God as a trickster. They view him as a kind

of cosmic killjoy with a warped sense of humor. These individuals often come from an abusive background, so their ability to trust a father figure has been severely damaged. To them, God lives only to bring them some kind of grief, usually after stringing them along and lulling them into a sense of security. As a result, they withhold intimate trust from him. Ironically, these people also tend to have a firm conviction about the moral superiority of God, so they do not see his trickery as evil on his part, but as something they have come to deserve.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus set up stringent standards for his disciples, but he also went to great lengths to change people's picture of God the Father. In today's environment of parental abuse, transient relationships, and growing isolationism, this portion of Scripture provides comfort for the deepest needs of many adults who are, inwardly, abandoned children.

In 7:11, Jesus brought his argument of verses 9-11 to a point. Because even the most evil parents provide the basic necessities for their children, how much more can we trust the Father in heaven, who is free from sin. (Note the assumption here of universal sinfulness; see Rom. 3:23.)

7:12. The "Golden Rule" needs to be seen in a fresh light. For those who know the Bible, this verse has the tendency to go the way of John 3:16, often quoted but seldom applied. Jesus gave his audience a simple and profound principle to guide them in relating to others. We are to treat them the way we would want them to treat us in the same circumstance.

Jesus indicated that this "Golden Rule" sums up much of the Old Testament teaching on interpersonal relationships. Leviticus 19:18, together with Deuteronomy 6:5, quoted by Jesus in Matthew 22:35-40, is essentially an equivalent statement (see also Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14).

Jesus finished his sermon with a series of challenges to wise choice and obedient action. He provided no new ethical teaching; rather, he challenged the disciple to obey what had already been taught. It is probably best to see 7:15-20 and 7:21-23 together as one warning rather than as a series of different warnings. These warnings emphasize the same message: Choose!

Then throughout the conclusion, the basic choices are laid before us. We see contrasts between two choices: life or destruction. This passage is the New Testament equivalent of the blessings and curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 11:26-29; 28. We also see a strong parallel to Moses' parting challenge: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him" (Deut. 30:19-20a; cf. Matt 16:24-27).

Another thread throughout the conclusion is the emphasis on doing God's will. Jesus prescribed the test of false prophets-teachers (Deut 13:1-11; 18:20-22). Every speaker and teacher of Scripture is to be tested against the truths in God's Word (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19). Note fruit (7:16-20), he who does the will of my Father" (7:21), evildoers (7:23), and puts them into practice (7:24). The difference between life and destruction boils down not to what a person hears and believes, but to what he does. The dividing line lies between doing right and doing wrong rather than between doing the spectacular and doing the ordinary (7:22-23).

Jesus made it clear that moral behavior is more important even than miraculous acts. Character matters. This warning must lead us to the conclusion that what may appear to be miraculous can be either: (1) convincingly faked or (2) imitated by evil powers. Miraculous acts in and of themselves guarantee nothing.

In the broader context, this emphasis on doing righteousness cannot be construed as a works-oriented gospel. Jesus placed obedience in the context of the picture of a helpless child (5:3-5,36; 6:11,25-34; 7:7-11) who is utterly dependent on the Father, even for the ability to do what is right (5:6; 6:12-13). Other New Testament passages that emphasize doing righteousness are Matthew 5:16,20,48; Romans 2:13; James 1:22,25; 2:14; 1 John 2:17.

A third thread found in the sermon's conclusion is the continual reference to final judgment. Note life and destruction (7:13-14), fire (7:19), enter the kingdom of heaven (7:21), on that day (7:22), away from me (7:23), and the foolish builder's house that fell (7:27). Jesus made it clear to his listeners that their present choices had eternal consequences, so now was the time to choose wisely. Jesus was concerned that his followers live every day alert to coming judgment.

7:13-14. In his first concluding warning—the “two ways”—Jesus talked about the rigors of true discipleship. The narrow gate is the way of personal faith in Christ. This is precisely what the Pharisees missed so badly (Matt. 5:20). The Pharisees used the wide . . . gate, which is the normal human tendency toward dependence on self-righteousness. The number of people who would, historically, find the narrow way has by now mounted into the millions, if not billions. But Jesus' few is a relative term. The true servant of the kingdom will always be in the minority.²

References

1. “How Can I Jumpstart My Prayer Life?” Desiring God, March 5, 2020. <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-can-i-jumpstart-my-prayer-life>.
2. Weber, Stu. *Matthew*. Edited by Max E. Anders. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000.

Author Bio

John Piper (“How Can I Jumpstart My Prayer Life?”)

John Piper is founder and teacher of desiringGod.org and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is the author of more than 50 books, and more than 30 years of his preaching and teaching is available free of charge at desiringGod.org.

Stu Weber (Matthew)

Stu Weber is senior pastor of Good Shepherd Community Church near Gresham, Oregon. He is a much-in-demand international speaker and the author of the popular *Four Pillars of a Man’s Heart*, *Tender Warrior*, *All the King’s Men*, and *Along the Road to Manhood*. He and his wife, Linda, have three children: Kent, Blake, and Ryan.

Max Anders (Matthew)

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume *Holman Bible Commentary* series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at www.maxanders.com to help people grow spiritually.

Timothy Keller (Prayer)

Timothy Keller is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, which he started in 1989 with his wife, Kathy, and three young sons. Dr. Keller’s books, including the New York Times bestselling *The Reason for God* and *The Prodigal God*, have sold over 2 million copies and been translated into 25 languages.

D.A. Carson (Praying with Paul)

D. A. Carson (PhD, University of Cambridge) is research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, and is the author or editor of more than fifty books, including *The God Who Is There* and *How Long, O Lord?* He is one of the founders of The Gospel Coalition and an active guest lecturer in academic and church settings around the world.

Donald Whitney (Praying the Bible)

Don Whitney has been Professor of Biblical Spirituality and Associate Dean at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, since 2005. Before that, he held a similar position (the first such position in the six Southern Baptist seminaries) at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, MO, for 10 years. He is the founder and president of The Center for Biblical Spirituality. Don is a frequent speaker in churches, retreats, and conferences in the U.S. and abroad.