



A JOURNEY OF FAITH
SESSION FIVE

5 A Guide to
Prayer and
Fasting

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“A Guide to Prayer and Fasting”
Session Five of Ten Sessions from the book:
*A Journey of Faith Discipleship Ministry:
Bible Answers to Life’s Toughest Questions*

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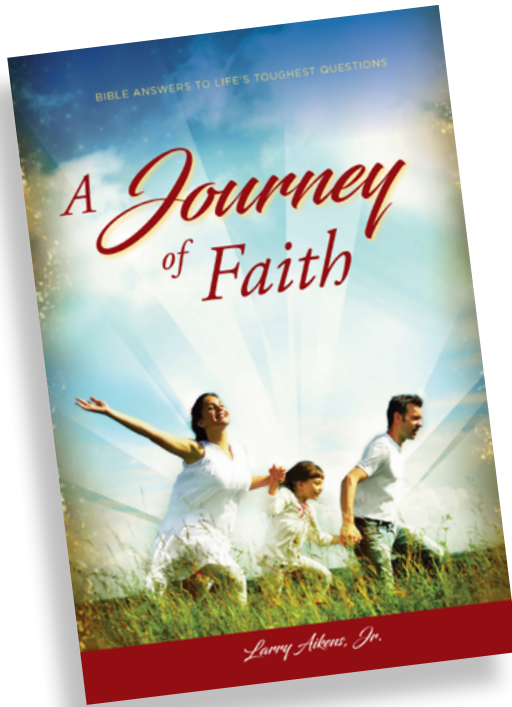
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SESSION **FIVE** FROM

A Journey of Faith

BIBLE ANSWERS TO
LIFE'S TOUGHEST QUESTIONS



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A SPECIAL INVITATION

As a pastor since 1992, I have realized that many people have questions on their mind about God and the Bible. Sometimes they tell me that they aren't sure they should ask, but they wonder, "Why *do* bad things happen in this world—especially to good people? Doesn't God love us, can't God protect us? Why doesn't God answer *my* prayers?"

So many people have said to me, "Pastor, I have been trying to read the Bible, but I just don't understand it. And besides, where did all these different versions of the Bible come from. Which one should I use? It's just so confusing!"

And the questions keep on coming: "How can I know for sure that I will be in Heaven when I die? Has my life really mattered? Is there any help in the Bible for my personal finances? How can I make better decisions? Do you believe in speaking in tongues? Can a person recover from addictions?" And on they go...

All of these are good and fair questions—completely necessary—and they have caused me to really pray for guidance of the Holy Spirit as I have studied God's Word to try to find answers for what I consider to be *the toughest questions about life*. This book is the product of that research and experience—trying to get at answers that will help you understand God better.

I am quick to admit that I can't answer all of the toughest questions completely—some of life's mysteries God just hasn't fully explained—but I have tried to provide sessions in *A Journey of Faith Discipleship Ministry* to at least engage with these questions fairly.

These sessions provide a framework to process these mysteries through a biblical understanding of what God has explained to us and really wants us to know. You might be surprised at just how much can be uncovered if you are willing to do a little bit of discovery in a guided setting. So many people with the toughest questions have told me that this study has helped them immensely.

I want to thank these folks who have *journeyed* with us up to this point. Each sincere person has deepened my faith, and has in some way been an encourager to produce the resource that you hold in your hand. I feel indebted to all who have spoken into my *Journey of Faith*, and especially to the Holy

Spirit who has guided each of us, and has revealed the truth of God's Word to our hearts as we have diligently pursued a relationship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

It is my sincere hope that you will also travel with us and take the time to study these provided materials carefully. This *Journey* very well could be a wise investment in your relationship with Almighty God. My prayer is that through the power of the Holy Spirit, you may emerge from this series of studies a more informed and dedicated follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your fellow Journeyer,

Larry

Psalm 40:1-3

WELCOME TO THE JOURNEY!

We are delighted that you have joined us for *A Journey of Faith*. We know that this is a wise investment you are making in your life, and it is our sincere desire that you will understand more of God's love for you and how you fit into God's plan of grace. We would like to introduce you to a few practical ideas:

- ✓ When you watch or attend the sessions, be sure to have a Bible, this resource, and a way to take notes. We will be studying the Bible, using the *New Living Translation*. While it is not required, it might be helpful for you to purchase this translation. We suggest the *NLT Illustrated Study Bible*.
- ✓ Before each session, please read carefully the material you have received. We believe that *Truth Discovered Is Truth Retained!* Please come to the sessions prepared.
- ✓ We offer this *Journey* with appreciation to those whose questions, together with our own, have challenged us to dig deep into God's Word for answers. It is because of their curiosity that this discipleship ministry has been developed. As you study, we realize that you also may have questions of your own. Please feel free to ask your questions during our discussion time, or contact your facilitator throughout the week. We are always happy to talk with you about your *Journey*.
- ✓ After the session, please complete the Discussion Questions and Abiding Principles on our website. Submit these for extra credit!
- ✓ If you are enjoying *A Journey of Faith*, please refer a friend to Journey with us. Visit www.onlyJesus4me.com to discover how to become a Licensed Facilitator and offer this life-changing resource to others. It is easy and rewarding!
- ✓ Before our study each week, we will say this prayer together:
“Dear heavenly Father, I ask that you open my heart to receive the Scripture for today's lesson. I also ask for the Holy Spirit to give me courage to take the steps of a true disciple in following Jesus, as truth is revealed to me through this *Journey of Faith*. Thank you for your grace at work in my life to draw me closer to your awesome love. I pray in Jesus' holy name, Amen.”

THEME VERSES

2 Peter 1:3a, 5a

³By his *Divine Power*,
God has given us
Everything we need
for living a *Godly Life*.

⁵In view of all this, make
every effort to *Respond*
to God's *Promises*.
Supplement [or add to]
Your Faith.



ABIDING PRINCIPLES

JOHN 14:13-14

¹³“You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!”

MATTHEW 18:19-20

¹⁹“I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. ²⁰For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.”

HEBREWS 4:16

So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

INTRODUCTION TO SESSION FIVE

Jesus taught in [Luke 18:1](#) that we “should always pray and never give up.” [James 5:16](#) says, “The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.” Many have proven these verses to be true. R. A. Torrey, speaking from his own experience, wrote: “Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God’s infinite grace and power. ...No one can stand against the [person] who knows how to pray and who meets all the conditions of prevailing prayer and who really prays.”¹

The question is, how many Christians *really* pray, or even know *how* to pray? Do you pray? Do you know how to get your prayers answered?

Let me ask these questions another way... What if you were in a desperate situation and couldn’t call upon anyone else—not the pastor, not a Christian friend, not anyone on social media—to pray for you? Would you know how to get in touch with God? Would you know how to pray? Would you have confidence that God would hear and answer your prayers?

Torrey, in his powerful book on prayer affirmed: “All that God is, and all that God has, is at the disposal of prayer. But we must use the key.”²

It is my sincere prayer that this session will teach you the basics of how to start a prayer life, and also will introduce you to another powerful avenue of reaching God’s heart, the avenue of Spirit-led fasting. Think with me about this: *You are not a product of your environment or the circumstances of life; rather, you are a product of your prayers.*³

TEXT: MATTHEW 6:5-15

Jesus' Teaching about Prayer and Fasting

⁵ “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get.

⁶ But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

⁷ When you pray, don’t babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again.

⁸ Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

⁹ Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.

¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today the food we need, ¹² and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

¹³ And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

[For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.] ⁴

¹⁴ If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you.

¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.”



SESSION 5: A GUIDE TO PRAYER AND FASTING

For our encouragement and instruction, the Scriptures record examples of courageous prayers that were answered by God in definite ways.

Consider:

- **The prayer of Hannah.**

1 Samuel 1:26-27 – ²⁶“Sir, do you remember me?” Hannah asked. “I am the very woman who stood here several years ago praying to the LORD. ²⁷I asked the LORD to give me this boy, and he has granted my request.”

- **The prayer of Elijah.**

1 Kings 18:36-38 – ³⁶At the usual time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command. ³⁷O LORD, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself.” ³⁸Immediately the fire of the LORD flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even

licked up all the water in the trench!

- **The prayer of Jabez.**

1 Chronicles 4:10 – He was the one who prayed to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and expand my territory! Please be with me in all that I do, and keep me from all trouble and pain!” And God granted him his request.

- **The prayer of Paul.**

2 Corinthians 12:8-9 – ⁸Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. ⁹Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.

How important it is for us to learn to pray! Like Jesus’ disciples, we should ask, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). Our Lord’s response to his disciples is recorded in detail in Matthew 6 and serves as the framework for this session. Before teaching how prayer should be structured, Jesus gave us these basic concepts:

1. **The sincerity of prayer (Matthew 6:5).**

- a. We do not pray to attract attention to ourselves.
- b. We do not pray to heighten public awareness of needs.

2. **The secrecy of prayer (Matthew 6:6).**

- a. Jesus did not forbid public prayer, in the sense of praying in community with other believers (see the example of the early church in Acts 4:23-31).
- b. Jesus taught that all prayer should be genuine.
- c. One should not pray in public if he or she does not have a vibrant *private* prayer life.

3. **The simplicity of prayer (Matthew 6:7-8).**

- a. Prayer should not be full of meaningless words.
- b. Prayer does not have to be long to be effective.
- c. Prayer is not a performance; rather, it is a time of sharing with our loving heavenly Father.

After these basic concepts were understood, Jesus gave his disciples a model prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), often called “The Lord’s Prayer.” Like the disciples, we can learn specific elements from this model prayer that should be included in our daily prayers. In other words, this model prayer serves as an outline of how to structure our prayers so that they are meaningful and effective.

*The Lord’s Prayer outlines
how to Structure our prayers.*

- I. The salutation of our prayers: “Our Father in heaven.”**
 - A. We have access to God because of our membership in the family of God.
 - B. Notice the tone, or respectful attitude, in which we are to approach Almighty God, “Our Father in heaven.”
- II. The sanctity of our prayers: “May your name be kept holy.”**
 - A. This phrase should remind us of the holiness and purity of God. We need to sanctify, or set God apart, in our own hearts. God is holy and above all else.
 - B. A primary purpose of prayer is to worship God.
1 Peter 3:15a – You must worship Christ as Lord of your life.
 - C. Worship should come *before* sharing our needs.
- III. A natural outflow of worship is surrender: “May your kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”**
 - A. In the model prayer in Matthew 6, note carefully that worship is first, then surrender, and *then* sharing our needs with God. This order is very important.

- B. Jesus is teaching us to express in prayer that we are willing to place ourselves under the authority of God—as if we are already living in heaven.
- C. For prayer to be effective, we must unconditionally surrender to God to accept his divine will and outcome in the situations we pray about. Notice this was the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, just before he was crucified: “Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine” (Luke 22:42).

IV. Now comes the time to share our needs with our heavenly Father: “Give us today the food we need.”

- A. Prayer is a time for us to secure God’s blessings in our lives.
John 16:23b-24 – ²³“I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. ²⁴You haven’t done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy.”
- B. Our Father invites us to share with God our every need.
Matthew 21:22 – “You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it.”
- C. **Caution:** God will only answer prayer that is according to God’s design for our lives. Prayer requests are not about getting God to give us what we *want*; rather, we are requesting the things we *need* in order to serve God.
1 John 5:14-15 – ¹⁴And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. ¹⁵And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for.

James 4:2-3 – ²You want what you don’t have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can’t get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don’t have what you want because you don’t ask God for it. ³And even when you ask, you don’t get it because your motives are all wrong—you want

only what will give you pleasure.

V. We need to confess our sins after sharing our needs: “Forgive us our sins.”

A. In reference to eternal life, all of our sin *debt*—past, present, and future—is forgiven when we experience new birth in Christ.

B. Even so, disobedience to God after our salvation (or our *sins*) breaks our fellowship with God and can cause us to lose blessings and rewards.⁵

1 John 1:6 – So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth.

1. There are sins of commission—things that we do that are wrong.
2. There are sins of omission—things we should have done, but failed in some way.

C. These sins of disobedience need to be confessed.

1 John 1:9 – But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

D. Fellowship with God is restored when we acknowledge our disobedience and ask God for forgiveness.

Proverbs 28:13 – People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.

VI. In order to obtain forgiveness from God, we must be willing to forgive others in Christian sympathies: “As we have forgiven those who sin against us.”

A. We have been commanded to actively practice *unlimited* forgiveness.

1 Peter 3:8 – Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.

Ephesians 4:32 – Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

B. Notice what Jesus said to us, just after he gave this model prayer to us: “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will

forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15).

1. A lack of forgiveness for others will hinder our prayers from being answered.
2. We are to continue to forgive time and again. Notice the phrase in verse 12, “As we have forgiven those...” This suggests that we are to continually forgive, even as God continually forgives us.
Matthew 18:21-22 – ²¹Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?” ²²“No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!”

VII. Our prayers should continue with a request for divine strengthening to grow in our faith: “Don’t let us yield to temptation.”

- A. In this verse, *temptation* comes from the Greek word *peirasmos*, which carries the idea of proving someone, or putting someone to the test.⁶
- B. God allows trials to come into our lives to challenge us to grow in our faith.
James 1:2-4 – ²Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.
- C. God never tempts us to do evil.
James 1:13 – And remember, when you are being tempted [Greek *periazō* - enticed to do evil], do not say, “God is tempting me.” God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else.⁷
- D. When we pray, “don’t let us yield to temptation,” we are asking God for two things:
 1. We are asking God to only test our faith in meaningful ways that will accomplish God’s purposes.
 2. We are asking God for the strength to pass the tests of faith that God chooses to bring our way.

E. God has promised to answer both of these requests:

1 Corinthians 10:13 – The temptations [*peirasmos*, or testings] in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.⁸

VIII. Our prayers should include a request for safety, that God will “Rescue us from the evil one.”

A. Sin is a result of the lust of our flesh.

Matthew 26:41 – “Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation [to evil]. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!”

B. The evil one, Satan, provides opportunities for the lust of the flesh to be fulfilled.

James 1:14 – Temptation [to evil] comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away.

C. Victory over sin comes through prayer and faith in God.⁹

Steps to victory over addictions and besetting sins:

1. Confess to God your weakness and your sin—own your behavior and quit making excuses.
2. Take steps to provide accountability in this area of weakness. Do not trust yourself to be strong enough to resist temptation—stay away from whatever/whoever is causing you to sin.
3. Confess your weaknesses to others who will pray for you and share with you their own struggles and victories.
4. Seek godly and wise counsel. To break stubborn addictions, you need professional help and rehabilitation. The local hospital is a primary point of contact, but there are also ministries that will help with this journey.¹⁰
5. Die to the flesh and live in the Spirit (Romans 6:11-15).
6. Cooperate with the work God is doing in your life. Be faithful to church, Bible study, and prayer.

Philippians 2:13 – For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

7. Look to God to supply your needs in the right way, and pray that God will help you to be satisfied with these provisions.

Psalm 23:5 – You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.

8. Know that God loves you, even when you fail to live up to who you are in Christ. Accept forgiveness and work back through these steps until the bondage of sin is broken in your life (read Psalm 33:18-22).

God loves you...

Unconditionally.

IX. A summary statement: “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

- A. When we pray, “Yours is the kingdom,” we are acknowledging once again that God is in control of all things, and we submit to God’s authority in the resolution of our needs as they relate to God’s eternal purposes.
- B. When we pray, “Yours is the power,” we acknowledge our complete dependence on God to supply our every need.
- C. When we pray, “Yours is the glory forever,” we acknowledge that we are trusting in God to answer our prayers in a way that will bring the most glory and honor to God.

D. When we pray, “Amen,” we are agreeing with God and transferring our burdens to God’s care.

X. Some thoughts about sacrificial praying, Jesus referred to as “fasting,” as he taught on prayer.

Matthew 6:16-18 – ¹⁶“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

Please note: Not much is said these days about the spiritual discipline of fasting to seek God in prayer, yet this is a biblical idea that Jesus taught us in Matthew 6. I don’t feel that systematic fasting is something that is required to live a holy life, and in my opinion, fasting should not be entered into without prayer, counsel, and consideration.

Fasting is another avenue to touch the heart of God and humbly seek God’s direction in our lives. Therefore, we should study what fasting means and be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit of God to engage in this type of spiritual discipline.

I will warn you that fasting is a very tough spiritual discipline; however, I have found that through Spirit-led fasting, I have been brought to a greater awareness of God’s purposes in my life, and at times it has helped me to sort through the most confusing situations that I have faced. I offer a few introductory thoughts to you, in hopes that you will begin a more in-depth study on a fascinating practice that could be a great blessing to you in the times of life’s greatest challenges.

A. Fasting traditionally involves going without food for a specified period of time. Instead, it could consist of giving up any special privilege in order to focus on God and spend more time in prayer (e.g. giving up TV for a while).

Please note: If you feel led of God to fast in a traditional manner,

please consult with your medical doctor first to be certain that your health will allow this type of fast. Other types of fasting that don't call for abstinence of food can also be just as effective. Also, please understand that fasting from food should never require you to fast from water. You should always stay *well-hydrated* during any fast.

1. The length of the fast varies and should be part of your discernment process in prayer. I would suggest starting with a twenty-four (24) hour fast, and perhaps work your way up to several days.
 2. There should be a well-defined and clearly written need that is stated before God as you enter into a time of fasting.
- B. Fasting should not be done to appear righteous to others.
1. Fasting should not be done out of duty.
 2. Fasting should not be done to impress others.
- C. Fasting should not be done to try to manipulate God or people (Read Isaiah 58:3-11).

ILLUSTRATION

An elderly man once shared with me that he had fasted from food for forty (40) days. When I asked him what he learned from the experience, he responded, "I will never get God to do what I tell him to do!"



- D. Fasting is for the purpose of appealing to God.
1. Four biblical reasons to fast:
 - a. To focus on God
 - b. To seek victory over sin
 - c. To seek special relief from burdens
 - d. To seek freedom from Satanic oppression

2. Five results of fasting for the proper reasons:
 - a. Fasting can lift confusion.
 - b. Fasting can renew health.
 - c. Fasting can protect our testimony.
 - d. Fasting can secure God's glory in our lives.
 - e. Fasting can help us accept God's will.

IN CONCLUSION

John Wesley would open spiritual discussions with the question: “How is it with your soul?” May I ask that same question of you? How is it with *your* soul? Are you in touch with God through prayer?

After studying this session, you may feel that learning to pray seems like a very difficult process. May I encourage you that it doesn’t have to be that hard? Remember what Jesus said? “**Don’t babble on and on...**” (*Matthew 6:7*); just reverently talk to God about what you need.

Let me suggest an easy way to get started. Go back to the model prayer printed in our text. Start with the first phrase, “Our Father in heaven.” That’s right, just bow your head in reverence to God and say... “Our Father in heaven,” and pause and think about what you have said. Now, use that phrase as a reminder that you need to start out your prayer by thanking God for the fact that you are a Christian and part of God’s wonderful family. Go ahead, tell God how grateful you are... See, that wasn’t so hard, was it? Now the next phrase... Just follow Jesus’ outline.

*Spend Time with God and
Discover his will for you!*

To this day, I still think of each phrase of that model prayer, and pattern my prayers after what Jesus taught. I don’t think I am such a great pray-er, but I have developed a relationship with God, and I have seen God mold and shape me through prayer. God has also answered many of my prayers in ways that continue to amaze me.

Prayer is an opportunity to spend time with God. I think I have come to understand that prayer is not just asking and receiving, but it is more about

discovering God's will, asking God to enable me to be faithful to such, and becoming more like Christ as I open my heart to the grace of God at work in my life.

Sweet Hour of Prayer! Sweet hour of Prayer!

Thy wings shall my Petition bear

To him whose truth and faithfulness

Engage the waiting soul to Bless;

And since he bids me Seek his face,

Believe his word and Trust his grace,

I'll cast on him my every care,

And wait for thee, Sweet Hour of prayer.¹¹

Remember, you are not a product of your environment or the circumstances of life; rather, you are a product of your prayers.

ENDNOTES

¹ Reuben Archer (R. A.) Torrey, *The Power of Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2000), 16.

² Ibid.

³ A powerful thought the Holy Spirit placed upon my heart that has changed my way of thinking about prayer and its place in my life.

⁴ This is an example of textual variants discussed in Session Four. The NLT footnote says, “Some manuscripts add *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*”

⁵ To make a distinction: Sometimes when we talk of *sin* (singular), we are referring to our entire debt of sin, while *sins* (plural) refers to individual acts of sin that a person commits. Payment in full for our sin debt was provided by the blood of Jesus Christ. The moment a person is born again, he or she is “justified”: their debt for all past, present, and future sin is removed, and Christ’s righteousness is placed on their account. This person is reconciled to God—has a right “standing” before God—because in God’s sight, he or she now is clothed in Christ’s righteousness. This is the only way a sinful human being can be allowed into heaven with God, Who is holy. But because the sin nature is not removed at salvation, we still commit sins after being born again. These sins need to be confessed in order to restore fellowship with God.

⁶ Strong, NT: 3986.

⁷ Ibid., NT: 3985.

⁸ Ibid., NT: 3986.

⁹ For further help, study Romans 7:18-25 with Galatians 2:20.

¹⁰ For example: one very affordable faith-based program for people who want serious freedom from addictions is “The Transformers Program” operated by the Winston-Salem Rescue Mission in North Carolina. You can read about their program and find testimonials on their webpage: www.wsrescue.org/transformers-program/.

¹¹ From the hymn, “Sweet Hour of Prayer,” written in 1845 by William W. Walford (1772-1850), a blind preacher from England. This hymn was first printed in the *New York Observer* on September 13, 1845.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have you read and studied this entire session? Yes No

Please answer the Discussion Questions below in complete sentences, using our website. When you submit your answers to OJM, you will get a copy of Larry's and Diane's answers in return via email! (You may wish to keep a copy of your answers to compare yours with theirs as you continue discovering truth.) If you are not sure how to answer each question, go ahead and "take a stab at it." Once you start writing, you may surprise yourself! There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. We want to hear your thoughts!

1. **There is an order of priorities given to us in the Lord's Prayer. Why do you suppose we should first worship God, then surrender ourselves to God, then share our needs, and then confess our sins? Explain.**
2. **Discuss and explain the difference between our debt of sin forgiven in salvation (past, present, and future), and our many sins that need to be confessed on a daily basis.**
3. **Why should we pray, "Rescue us from the evil one?" How is this different from "Don't let us yield to temptation?"**
4. **Discuss a possible scenario that might lead you to consider fasting as an avenue to touch the heart of God.**
5. **Please comment on the question presented in the conclusion, "How is it with your soul?"**

IN ADDITION...

Remember to write out the Abiding Principles on the website. If you complete these simple assignments, you will earn an upgraded certificate!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All the glory and praise goes to God for all of the many blessings we have in Christ Jesus our Lord. I truly am grateful to God for the wonderful people God has put in my life since I was but a small child. I chose the theme verses for Only Jesus 4 Me (OJM) from [Psalm 71:17-18](#), for truly as the Psalmist said: “[God has] taught me from my earliest childhood.” I am indebted to many voices and guides who have spoken into my faith *Journey* to bring me to this new opportunity to teach others *A Journey of Faith*.

My *Journey of Faith* started many years ago, when in God’s grace and providence, God allowed me to be born into a Christian home. When I was but three years of age, God led my parents, Larry and Linda, into full-time missions work. My early life was enriched by their experiences of faith and service to Christ. I owe them my lasting gratitude for the many ways they gave me a wonderful start in life.

Further, I am very grateful for the church families that have allowed me to serve Jesus in their midst since 1992. So much of what I have learned has been in the pursuit of their needs. Also, searching questions that have come to the surface in both my life and theirs, have called forth a diligent study on my part. I love each and every person with whom I have had the opportunity to minister throughout the years, and I appreciate all that they have taught me. Space would not allow me to thank each person by name, but to those who were part of these church families, know that I am eternally grateful that our journeys have intersected. I feel that we have blessed each other forward in our mutual faith, and I am thankful for what you have brought into my life.

I am grateful for a host of professors, pastors, teachers, and counselors who have spoken into my faith journey. I studied officially in many classrooms, but unofficially, I have sat at the feet of so many wonderful Christians—some whom I have pastored and others whom I have led as part of my church staff. Those very ones whom I was called to lead have led me in many ways. I can’t thank these mentors enough. I only wish that space would allow me to mention each one by name.

I also want to offer my appreciation to my first wife, Holly, and my children, Nathaniel and Jessica, for allowing me the time to pursue ministry, writing,

education, and the lofty dreams that I felt God placed within my heart. While I felt my motives were pure and my intentions were the best, I haven't always known how to balance my time and priorities well. I am sure that in my early zeal for God, I often got caught up in lofty goals that were more than what God had called me to pursue. In those times, my family suffered a great deal for my lack of attentiveness to them, and I regret that. I also made my share of mistakes and needed forgiveness. For those sacrifices they made to invest in who I have become, I offer my sincere thanks and humble gratitude. If I could go back, I would do things very differently. My children are grown now, and I love them very much.

God in his mercy and grace has allowed me to remarry a wonderful partner, Diane. I am very grateful for her support and the expertise that she has brought into my life. She is a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ, a grammarian, and an excellent musician. Her humble ways of living out her faith in Jesus Christ are constant lessons to me. She has a gentle spirit and has modeled to me the Christ-life, to which I aspire. I can't say "thank you" enough to her. She has a courage about her that is remarkable, and even though God has entrusted to her a battle with Stage IV cancer, she fights on with great courage. My thanks for her careful review of all of our written materials and the excellent edits. She might just make a grammarian out of me yet. I doubt it, but it is worth her continued try! Also, a special thank you is in order for Diane's parents, Don and Doris Johns. They are special folks, and they sure reared a fine daughter!

I must give a special thanks to my church family at Bethel. They are simply the BEST. I would never be able to express to them how much I love them and the church that we all call "home." It is such a privilege to be their pastor and to help carry on the work of Jesus. I appreciate Bethel's support and belief in the project of OJM. Their partnership is such a blessing to us. I want to give my appreciation to the chairperson of our Church Board, Robert Phillips, and his wife Lena, and also the chairperson of our Deacons, Ron Wampler, and his wife Carolyn. All of the leaders at Bethel are dear friends and encouragers in the work of Christ—I wish I had the space to list all of their names. I also want to thank our District Executive Minister, Bro. John Jantzi, for his review of some of our lessons and his excellent input and ideas. Also, my thanks go to him for believing in me and being the conduit that God used to bring Bethel and us together. He is a blessing and such an encouragement as we endeavor

to serve Christ together. I also want to give a shout out to the Discipleship Ministries Team with whom I have the privilege of serving: David Chappell, Jan Orndorff, and Debby Rimel are wonderful friends and encouragers. My “thank you” to the team! They have made me a better disciple of Jesus, and I appreciate their steady encouragement to look to Jesus and keep the attention on HIM!

Only Jesus 4 Me (OJM) was born out of a calling that I felt through fervent prayer on my knees. I shared the vision first with Diane, and she was right there to support me. We both prayed for God’s direction in putting the right people into our path to help launch this ministry. In the early days, God led us to a local businessman, C.L. Russell of C.L. Russell Photography in Broadway, Virginia. He is the creative genius behind the videography and photography! He and his wife, LaShonda, have become good friends, and we are very grateful for the ways they have supported OJM. In those early days, God also led us to Josh Hallahan of Christian Internet Design in Missoula, Montana. He and his team have brilliantly developed the website and have constantly been a source of encouragement in the Lord. They have found the tools to make the vision a reality! We are very grateful to them.

As we began to delve into the work of creating OJM, we realized very quickly that we needed some expertise in graphics design, technical issues, and developing the ministry materials, such as the book that you are reading. After much prayer, the Lord reminded me of a good friend who had assisted us on many previous projects, Tillman Ross of Graphic Imaging in Concord, North Carolina. We asked Tillman to consult with us as our Impressions Manager, and he graciously accepted. He is gifted at bringing colors, web pages, pictures and concepts into a unified whole. His creations speak of excellence, and we feel they are a wonderful reflection on OJM’s passion for Jesus. A “thank you” to Tillman for his steady and creative guidance, as well as being a friend in the Gospel ministry since 2003.

On the business side, we have been working with our CPA and friend, Ed Neese, from Greensboro, North Carolina. I pastored there in the late 1990’s and asked Ed to do my personal taxes. Since that time, Ed has done my yearly return and has counseled me on many financial matters. He loves the Lord Jesus, and he has been a true business friend. I am deeply grateful for his

guidance in financial matters concerning OJM, and ministry in general, but even more so for his consistent friendship and encouragement to both me and Diane. God has also brought into our lives a good friend and attorney, Dan Neher from Harrisonburg, Virginia. He is a solid brother in Christ and has been a source of encouragement and assistance in advising us on legal matters concerning OJM. We are grateful to Dan for his expertise.

Musically, God has put in our path a new friend from Nashville, Tennessee, Peter Young. Peter is an accomplished drummer, arranger, and producer. He has given “wings” to the theme song God allowed me to compose, “Only Jesus 4 Me,” and brought together incredible talent in Nashville to produce the song at the legendary Studio 19. He has been awesome to work with. Our thanks to Peter, and a thank you to the recording studio and all of the musicians who played on the project: Kyle Hershman, Studio Engineer; Chris Nole, Keyboards; Ron de la Vega, Bass; Peter Young, drums; Tony Paoletta, pedal steel; Joe Spivey, Acoustic Guitar, Fiddle and Mandolin, and Chas Williams, Lead Guitar. Mike Lusk is the awesome singing talent on the theme song, and he sounded just great. We appreciate Mike and all the musicians for their contributions!

There are so many others God has used in my life—many friends, family members, neighbors, and colleagues who have prayed for me—and I am truly grateful for each and every one. If I have failed to mention you by name, please understand that it was not on purpose. Yet above and beyond all others, I am humbled by the friendship of Jesus. I am so grateful that Jesus would entrust to me his vision for *Only Jesus 4 Me* and *A Journey of Faith*. I realized long ago that inspiration and creativity do not come from a human being; rather, all that is good comes from the Holy Spirit working through a yielded person to accomplish the purpose of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. When I am at my best, I feel the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and I give all the glory to Jesus. “In him, I live and move and have my being” (Acts 17:28). I know all the glory goes to God and I am eternally grateful for any small part that I have in Jesus’ kingdom. If this ministry touches your heart and is a help to you, please join with us in giving God the glory. God alone is worthy! Praise be to Jesus! Thank you, Jesus. Only Jesus 4 Me! Amen!



PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Photo 1: “Woman Praying in a Park,” September 5, 2016, by Ben White from Michigan, United States, on Unsplash.

Photo 2: “Serenity Now Moment at Lake Tahoe,” Zephyr Cove, United States, May 19, 2018, by Keegan Houser on Unsplash.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Larry was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and reared on the missionary field. He is the second of six children. His folks served the Spanish-speaking world until Larry was a teenager, and then they traveled as a family in full-time evangelistic work in the United States. He recalls being in forty-three states and three other countries before going to college. During these formative years, Larry gave his heart and life to Christ and felt a calling to serve the Lord in local church work.

Larry was ordained to the full-time Gospel ministry in 1992, serving as a music and youth minister until 1995. Since that time, he has had the privilege of lifting up Christ as a pastor in the Baptist Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Church of the Brethren (COB). He is currently serving as the pastor of Bethel-Mayland COB in Broadway, Virginia, and the interim pastor of Pine Grove COB in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He also serves with the Shenandoah District COB as a member of the Discipleship Ministry Team.

Larry has earned three seminary degrees: a Master of Theology (Th.M.) and a Doctorate of Theology (Th.D.) from Covington Theological Seminary, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia; and a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Larry is the father to two grown children, Nathaniel and Jessica, and a grandfather to Kirsten. Larry and his wife Diane reside in New Market, Virginia. When not busy in the ministry, Larry enjoys music, the outdoors, golf, tennis, riding motorcycles, and reading—especially biographies. Diane shares many of the same interests and is also a wonderful pianist. They both enjoy ministering, spending time together, traveling, and meeting other believers.



ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Diane was born near Tacoma, Washington, and grew up as the baby sister of two brothers. At seven years of age, her family moved across the country back to her mother's home in the mountains of Pennsylvania. They took up residence in an old farmhouse on the edge of the family farm and got very involved in their local church and Christian school. Diane's dad served as an assistant to the pastor, and her mother taught high school maths and sciences in the Christian school.

After graduation from high school, Diane went to Pensacola Christian College (PCC) and earned her bachelor's degree in Music Ministry in 1999, traveling with the PCC Ensemble for two years and helping to promote the college. She was offered an opportunity to continue her studies as a Graduate Assistant and earned a seminary degree in Church Music (M.C.M.) through Pensacola Theological Seminary in 2001.

Diane has had a diverse opportunity to experience Christ and how various traditions practice their faith. She grew up in a Community church, belonged to a non-denominational church, served on staff at a Baptist church, attended a Full Gospel church, and has belonged to the United Methodist Church. She is now a member of the Church of the Brethren, where she serves with her husband, Larry. Diane has also served the local church as a choir member and director, pianist, Sunday school teacher, secretary, and financial secretary. She is very involved in supporting Larry's ministry as a pastor's wife.

She offers her input in the discussion questions throughout this book as a person who has experienced the *Journey* many times. She hopes that her input will help to broaden the discussions and further the conversations around these important topics.



A JOURNEY OF FAITH INCLUDES

- Session 1 | God's Wonderful Assurance of Salvation
- Session 2 | What Does Baptism Mean?
- Session 3 | The Meeting House of God
- Session 4 | Is the Bible Relevant for Today?
- Session 5 | A Guide to Prayer and Fasting
- Session 6 | God's Will: Revealed & Concealed
- Session 7 | Financial Wisdom
- Session 8 | The Worldwide Ministry of the Holy Spirit
- Session 9 | Anointed by the Holy Spirit
- Session 10 | Why Do Bad Things Happen to God's Children?



Don't Miss A Session!