

Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of August 1st-7th

In last week's sermon, the book *A Method for Prayer*¹ by Matthew Henry was mentioned. Since the time of its publication in 1712, this volume has consistently been a treasured resource among God's people, helping to train its readers in biblically-saturated, practically-grounded language for adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication and intercession in our conversation with God. What follows is an "interview" with the author, drawing from his writings on prayer. Please use it as a further tool in your prayer arsenal. Work through it in your personal devotional time, perhaps with your spouse and children, or in your community group.

Q: Pastor Henry, it's a privilege to spend this time with you. Thank you for granting this interview. If you could start the conversation with one observation about prayer, what would it be?

A: "I love prayer. It is that which buckles on all the Christians's armor."²

Q: Well said. I trust you're referring to the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:10-20. You're right, according to verse 18, we suit up for spiritual combat for the purposes of prayer. So, let's talk about prayer time. When do you recommend we pray?

A: "It is our wisdom and duty to begin every day with God...[as David writes]: 'My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayers to unto thee, and will look up [Psalm 5:3]...In the morning we are most free from company and business, and ordinarily have the best opportunity for solitude."³

Q: I take off for work awfully early in the morning. Though I do like to begin the day with a bit of prayer before I leave the house, I find that some of my best praying happens behind the wheel as I'm eastbound on 394. Does God hear prayer in the car, too?

A: "...wherever God finds a praying heart, he will be found a prayer-hearing God."⁴

1 Matthew Henry, *A Method for Prayer: Freedom in the Face of God*. Christian Heritage Publishers: Scotland. (1712) 2017. With an Introduction by Ligon Duncan.

2 Henry quoted in Joel R. Beeke & Randall Peterson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to the Modern Reprints*. Reformation Heritage Books: Grand Rapids, MI. 2006. pp.330-331.

3 Henry quoted in Joel R. Beeke & Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*. Reformation Heritage Books: Grand Rapids, MI. 2012. p.878.

4 Henry quoted in Beeke & Jones, p.879.

Q: That's gracious of you. Let's turn to motives. What should compel us to pray?

A: "God's glory, and our own true happiness...in seeking his glory, we really and effectually seek our own true interests."⁵

Q: Do you have any encouragement regarding prayer throughout the day? Not like we can kneel beside the watercooler in the office, or engage in much meaningful intercession for our missionaries when three children are vying for their mother's attention in the kitchen. Yet we often find that some of our greatest times of need and spiritual weakness happen 'on the job'. How would you counsel?

A: "[Again, David writes]: 'On thee do I wait all the day [Psalm 25:5]...a patient expectation... [and] a constant attendance...[upon the Lord is essential]...To wait on God is to live a life of desire towards him, delight in him, dependance on him, and devotedness to him...Do we love to love God? ...[even while we work, be] ready to observe his will, and to do his work, and in everything to consult his honour and interest."⁶

Q: Tell me about family worship time. I know this was a hallmark of your ministry and a great item of interest in your instruction to the church of your day. Charles Spurgeon once quoted you as saying: "I agree with Matthew Henry when he says, 'They that pray in the family do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures in the family do better; but they that pray, and read, and sing do best of all'."⁷ What are your thoughts on the importance of family prayer and worship in the home?

A: "If our houses be houses of the Lord, we shall for that reason love home, reckoning our daily devotion the sweetest of our daily delights; and our family-worship the most valuable of our family-comforts...A church in the house will be a good legacy, nay, it will be a good inheritance, to be left to your children after you...Here the reformation must begin."⁸

Q: If I wanted to further research your writings on family worship, what titles should I look for? You wrote before the advent of copyright law so all your books are free online. What do you recommend on this topic?

A: "*Family Hymns* (1694)...and *A Church in the House: Family Devotions* (1704)."⁹

5 Henry quoted in Beeke & Jones, p.879.

6 Henry quoted in Beeke & Jones, p.880.

7 Quoted in Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History, & in Your Home*. The Center for Biblical Spirituality: Shepherdsville, KY. 2006.

8 Henry Quoted in Whitney, p.28.

9 Henry Quoted in Whitney, p.28.

Q: How important is it to close the day with God in prayer? I'm pretty tired by the time my head finally hits the pillow. Any words of encouragement here?

A: “[The Psalmist David writes] ‘I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety’ [Psalm 4:8]...Every bit we eat, and every drop we drink, is mercy; every step we take, and every breath we draw, mercy...[at night, we ought to say] ‘To thy glory, O God, I now go to sleep. Whether we eat or drink, yea, or sleep, for this is included in whatever we do, - we must do it to the glory of God...To thy grace O God, and to the word of thy grace I now commend myself’. It is good to fall asleep with a fresh surrender of our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, to God; now, ‘return to God as they rest, O my soul; for he has dealt bountifully with thee’...O that when I awake I maybe still with God; that the parenthesis of sleep, though long, may not break off my thread of communion with God, but that as soon as I awake I may resume it!”¹⁰

Q: Outstanding. I love it. Thank you for this refreshing perspective. Share with us about the role of the Bible in prayer. How does Scripture reading intersect with our prayers?

A: “God’s word must be the guide of your desires and the ground of your expectations in prayer...[always be] pleading the promises [of God in prayer]... in every prayer remember you are speaking to God...have an awe of him upon your spirit...Let us not be ‘rash with our mouth; and let not our heart be hasty to utter anything before God’; but let every word be well weighed, because God is in heaven, and we upon earth,’ Ecclesiastes 5:2”.¹¹

Q: Seeing as “God is in heaven, and we upon earth”, what’s our expectation that he hears us or cares to answer?

A: “...with humble boldness...let us...enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us...[Let us] profess our reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone.”¹²

Q: Ahh...so it all comes back to the gospel, doesn't it?

A: “Let all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ.”¹³

Amen and amen. Thank you for your wise words, Pastor Henry.

¹⁰ Henry Quoted in Beeke & Jones, pp.882, 883.

¹¹ Henry Quoted in Beeke & Jones, pp. 883, 884.

¹² Henry Quoted in Beeke & Jones, pp. 884, 885.

¹³ Henry Quoted in Beeke & Jones, p.886.