

## STREET WISE 6: THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

*“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”  
(Luke 11:13, NIV)*

WHEN YOU CONSIDER ALL THAT IS GOING ON AROUND YOU, you will find much to pray for. And those who are especially active in prayer even make a habit of looking for things to pray for. Off and on through the years, I have been asked by such intercessors who some of Christ’s faithful followers on golf’s tours are, because they would like to be praying for these brothers and sisters. And with such an active prayer life in place, I’m guessing that these intercessors are also praying for those who have yet to recognize Jesus in faith.

With the advent of so many news sources in our time, both traditional and alternative or social media, the crush of content can be overwhelming. Can I pray for it all? And if not, how do I know what to prioritize in my prayers?

These are good questions for the man or woman of God. It means they are trying to get one of the most important practices of our faith right. This matters in a time when many naysayers are asking other questions entirely: “Why do you bother to pray at all? Don’t you know that thoughts and prayers count for nothing? If you’re really concerned, you should get busy helping.” This is not a criticism that should bother us. Peter and Paul acknowledged that those outside the faith are looking at what we do to see whether our faith is real. But it ought to challenge us to take both our living and our praying seriously. So what should we be doing when it comes to prayer?

One, we should be praying in faith, knowing that God hears our prayers. James wrote that those who doubt when they pray should not expect a favorable answer (James 1:6-8).

Two, we should be seeking the will of God in our time of prayer. We know that God, like a loving Father, wants to show us favor. But more than this he wants to show us himself and what he has for us. For instance, have you ever asked for the Holy Spirit? Our passage today tells us that this is something God will surely give us, because it is his will for us.

Three, we should pray with perseverance and fervency. God wants to know we are earnest in our requests. We show him we are by coming to him again and again.

**Opening questions** Have you ever prayed for a famous person, such as an athlete, a film star, a musician, or a politician? What motivated this prayer? Do you have evidence that the prayer was answered?

**READING** Luke 11:1-13; James 5:13-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

### Learning to pray (Luke 11)

List several principles of prayer found in this passage. Do you see your own prayers in this passage, or do you think now that you should be praying differently?

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### Faith-filled prayers (James 5)

What specific prayers are considered here? What do you think “the prayer offered in faith” means? Would you say your own prayers are offered in faith or can they be strengthened?

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### Praying and praying and praying (1 Thessalonians 5)

What do you think it looks like to “pray continually” or “pray without ceasing”? What is the right balance between being a man or woman of prayer and a man or woman of action?

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