

# Session 3: Lessons from Martin Luther's Prayer Life

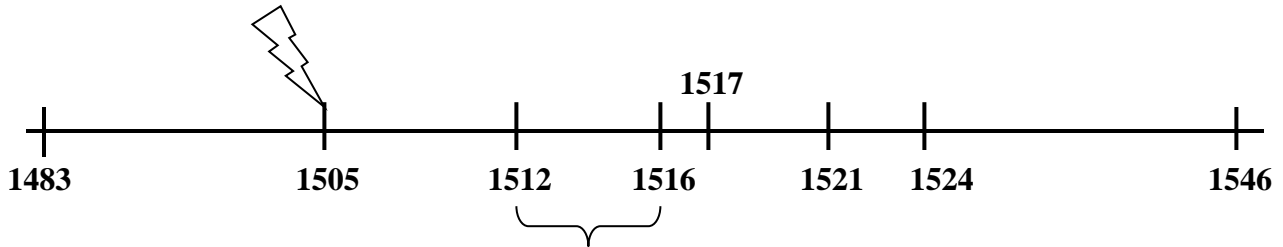
Six Men and Their Prayer Lives – Monday Night Bible Study 2025

Michael Garreau



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## I. Synopsis of Luther's Life



## II. Why should we listen to Martin Luther?

### A. He understood the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ praying.

1. Looking back Luther wrote, "Prayer under the papacy was pure torture of the poor conscience and only blabbering and making words; no praying but a work of obedience."
2. "How I tormented myself with those canonical hours before the gospel came, which by reason of much business I often intermitted [left out], I cannot express. On the Saturdays, I used to lock myself up in my cell, and accomplish what the whole week I had neglected. ...From this great torment we are now delivered by the gospel."

### B. He felt the pressures of work, \_\_\_\_\_, finances, & \_\_\_\_\_.

1. He was a full-time professor at University of Wittenburg.
2. He preached on weekends: \_\_\_\_\_ sermons in \_\_\_\_\_ years.
3. He had six children two of whom died before reaching adulthood.
4. He experienced \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ difficulties.

### C. He kept prayer \_\_\_\_\_ to his \_\_\_\_\_ and teaching.

1. Luther both taught and wrote much on prayer.
2. Luther lived constantly aware of his need of the prayers of others. Hardly a letter can be found in which Luther does not write, "\_\_\_\_\_."
3. Luther was known by close friends as a man of prayer.
  - a) "I cannot sufficiently admire the singular steadfastness, the happy attitude, the faith and hope of this man in serious times. . . . There is not a day on which he does not devote at least three hours, the very ones most suitable for studying, to prayer. Once I was fortunate to overhear his prayer. ...what faith in his words! He speaks with the great reverence of one who speaks to his God, and with the trust and hope of one who speaks with his father and friend."

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### D. *He experienced \_\_\_\_\_ in his prayer life.*

1. In a letter to his friend Melancthon in 1521, Luther confessed,
  - a) "I sit here like a fool and hardened in leisure, pray little, do not sigh for the church of God, yet burn in a big fire of my untamed body. In short I should be ardent in spirit, but I am ardent in the flesh, in lust, in laziness, leisure, and sleepiness. ... Already eight days have passed in which I have written nothing, in which I have not prayed or studied.
2. The reality of his own struggles and failures preserved him from teaching others in a condescending or idealistic manner. His approach to prayer is characterized by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ insights.

## III. Martin Luther's Teaching on Prayer

### A. *Prayer finds its \_\_\_\_\_ and power by faith in the \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Word.*

1. **In a sermon on prayer, Luther said,** "...if you wish to be well prepared [for prayer], take the promise and lay hold of God with it. ... Without faith in the promise, there is then, neither courage nor desire to pray, but mere uncertain delusion and a melancholy spirit; there is, therefore, no hearing of prayers, and both prayer and labor are lost."
2. You are fit to pray when "you proceed with bold courage, trusting in the truthfulness and certain promises of your gracious God."

### B. *Prayer is the means to \_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture and spiritual \_\_\_\_\_.*

1. "That the Holy Scriptures cannot be penetrated by study and talent is most certain. Therefore your first duty is to begin to pray, and to pray to this effect that if it please God to accomplish something for His glory—not for yours or any other person's—He very graciously grant you a true understanding of His words. For no master of the divine words exists except the Author of these words, as He says: 'They shall be all taught of God' (John 6:45). You must, therefore, completely despair of your own industry and ability and rely solely on the inspiration of the Spirit."

### C. *Prayer is the most \_\_\_\_\_ and yet the most \_\_\_\_\_ work of the Christian.*

1. "As a shoe maker makes a shoe, or a tailor makes a coat, so ought a Christian to pray. Prayer is the daily business of a Christian."
2. "There is no work like prayer. Mumbling with the mouth is easy... but with earnestness of heart to follow the words in deep devotion, that is, with desire and faith, so that one earnestly desires what the words say, and not to doubt that it will be heard: that is a great deed in God's eyes."
3. "The word 'instant' is a call to order and vigilance that everyone ... must hear and fear. For it means that praying must be a constant effort ... a labor that is harder than every

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other labor ... for it requires a subdued and broken mind and a high and triumphant spirit. ... Christians must practice prayer frequently and with diligence. For 'to be instant' does not only mean 'to be constantly engaged in something' but it means also 'to press on,' 'to quicken one's pace,' 'to demand earnestly.' So then, as there is nothing that Christians must do more frequently than praying, so there is also nothing that requires more labor and effort and, for this reason, is more effective and more fruitful."

## D. *Prayer should be \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and fervent.*

1. "It is of great importance that the heart be made ready and eager for prayer. As the Preacher says, "Prepare your heart for prayer, and do not tempt God" [Ecclus. 18:23]. What else is it but tempting God when your mouth babbles and the mind wanders to other thoughts?"
2. "...So, a good and attentive barber keeps his thoughts, attention, and eyes on the razor and hair and does not forget how far he has gotten with his shaving or cutting. If he wants to engage in too much conversation or let his mind wander or look somewhere else he is likely to cut his customer's mouth, nose, or even his throat. Thus if anything is to be done well, it requires the full attention of all one's senses and members, as the proverb says, "He who thinks of many things, thinks of nothing and does nothing right." How much more does prayer call for concentration and singleness of heart if it is to be a good prayer!"

## E. *Prayer is the chief \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ against the devil.*

1. "We know that our defense lies in prayer. We are too weak to resist the devil and his vassals. Let us hold fast to the weapons of the Christian; they enable us to combat the devil... our enemies may mock at us. But we shall oppose both men and the devil if we maintain ourselves in prayer and if we persist in it."
2. **The devil attempts to hinder praying in several ways:**
  - a) **1<sup>st</sup> attack:** Satan attempts to sow seeds of doubt into our hearts by reminding us of our great \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b) **2<sup>nd</sup> attack:** Satan suggests that this is \_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_ time.
  - c) **3<sup>rd</sup> attack:** Satan attempts to convince us of the \_\_\_\_\_ of prayer.
3. **Luther encouraged Christians to counter the devil's attacks in the following ways:**
  - a) **Against the 1<sup>st</sup> attack:** Never let your sense of \_\_\_\_\_ keep you from prayer. He urged believers to let their sin and need drive them to God, not away from him.
  - b) **Against the 2<sup>nd</sup> attack:** Luther encourages a \_\_\_\_\_ of prayer saying that we "should form the habit of praying daily for our needs, whenever we are aware of anything that affects us or other people around us."
  - c) **Against the 3<sup>rd</sup> attack:** "Behold, you could repulse the devil and all his false suggestions by basing your prayer on these three things: God's \_\_\_\_\_, His \_\_\_\_\_, and the manner and words Christ Himself taught. These things the devil cannot deny or annul."

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### F. *Prayer should be \_\_\_\_\_ after the \_\_\_\_\_ Prayer.*

1. "A Christian has prayed abundantly who has rightly prayed the Lord's Prayer."
2. **Caution:** "You should also know that I do not want you to recite all these words in your prayer. That would make it nothing but idle chatter and prattle... Rather do I want your heart to be stirred and guided concerning the thoughts which ought to be comprehended in the Lord's Prayer. These thoughts may be expressed, if your heart is rightly warmed and inclined toward prayer, in many different ways and with more words or fewer."

### G. *Prayer should be \_\_\_\_\_ and not overly \_\_\_\_\_.*

1. "Look to it that you do not try to do all of it, do not try to do too much, lest your spirit grow weary. Besides, a good prayer mustn't be too long. Do not draw it out. Prayer ought to be frequent and fervent."
2. "Brief prayers...pregnant with the Spirit, strongly fortified by faith...the fewer the words, the better the prayer. The more the words, the worse the prayer. Few words and much meaning is Christian. Many words and little meaning is pagan."

### H. *Prayer should \_\_\_\_\_ with a firm " \_\_\_\_\_ "!*

1. "Finally, mark this, that you must always speak the Amen firmly. Never doubt that God in his mercy will surely hear you and say "yes" to your prayers. Never think that you are kneeling or standing alone, rather think that the whole of Christendom, all devout Christians, are standing there beside you and you are standing among them in a common, united petition which God cannot disdain. Do not leave your prayer without having said or thought, 'Very well, God has heard my prayer; this I know as a certainty and a truth.' That is what Amen means."