

# STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

## HOW TO BE GROUNDED IN A CHAOTIC WORLD

### STUDY NINE

## Strengthening Your Grip on Prayer

*Matthew 6:5–15; Philippians 4:1–9*

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*God won't ignore you. God won't rip you off. You're His child!  
He's waiting for you to come to Him!*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**C**HILDREN hear the thunder roll, and they rush to their parents' bedroom no matter the time. They run into the arms of mom and dad, who love them dearly, regardless of the hour. They seek the help of those who are bigger, stronger, and able to keep them safe from harm.

The rumbling sounds of life's big problems frighten our hearts. Even minor concerns keep us awake at night. Unexpected bills, deadlines looming, stubborn health issues . . . and we can feel the threat getting closer and closer. But we have One whose greatness and strength are unmatched. His door is always open. We can enter *at any time!*

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll revisit the freedom that is ours to access our heavenly Father whenever. We'll let the Holy Spirit strengthen our grip on prayer.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Come to the Father now, using the psalmist's prayer as a guide:

*Help me understand the meaning of your commandments,  
and I will meditate on your wonderful deeds. (Psalm 119:27)*

Echo the psalmist's desire in your words, asking God to help you grasp His eternal truths.



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## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Prayer. It sounds so simple. It's just talking with our heavenly Father as children talk to a parent. And yet, as often happens with religious practices, we can bind up prayer in a package of rituals and expectations. Worried that we're not praying the right way and with the right words, we set prayer aside for the spiritual professionals.

As a Pharisee, Paul was one of those professionals. He had polished his prayers to a prideful gleam. After his conversion, however, Paul became a student of Christ's teaching on prayer, and his perspective changed. He treated prayer as a natural part of living—as natural as breathing. He also linked prayer to what we all long for in life.

Before examining Jesus' teaching on prayer, let's take a closer look at Paul's views in his letter to the church in Philippi. Paul founded the Philippian church during his second missionary journey around AD 52 (*Acts 16:11–40*). A decade later, he wrote a letter from prison, possibly in Rome, to encourage the young believers in their walk with God.



## Observation: The Practice of Prayer

During *observation*, we read attentively the biblical text to discover what it says.<sup>1</sup> Ask questions such as who, what, when, where, and why to obtain important details that you may have missed before.

### What We All Want in Life—Philippians 4:1–9

Paul referred to the Philippian believers as his “brothers and sisters . . . my joy and crown,” urging them to “stand firm in the Lord” (Philippians 4:1 NASB)—rooted, grounded, stable, flourishing in their relationship with Christ. We long for that, don't we? Paul also encouraged the two women to “live in harmony in the Lord” with each other—another quality we all want (4:2).

What other qualities do you observe in 4:4–5 and in 4:8–9?

*It's the frustration of the Christian life that we want all these things. We know they're right, but we don't enter into them in the depth that we want to, do we?*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Prayer is the key that unlocks the door of these desirable qualities. How did Paul describe the benefits of prayer in *Philippians 4:6–7*. Observe verse 6 carefully and note the two commands that Paul gave the Philippian brothers and sisters. What blessings resulted?

*We've become victimized by others packaging prayer as an unattainable, unrealistic standard. Nobody can do it "right" anymore. But prayer is meant to relieve anxiety, not create it. The result of prayer is God's peace.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

## What Went Wrong with Prayer—Matthew 6:5–15

How did the practice of prayer wander so far off track? Identify what went wrong with prayer in *Matthew 6:5–8, 14–15*. When we pray, we should watch out for what three things?

6:5–6: \_\_\_\_\_

6:7–8: \_\_\_\_\_

6:14–15: \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer consists *not* of complicated and sophisticated words that parade our religious acumen or thoughtless repetitions that show off our zeal. Rather, it's the normal outflow of our relationship with our heavenly Father.

In *6:9–13*, Jesus realigned the practice of prayer with God's original design for His people. What refreshing, approachable qualities do you see illustrated in the Lord's Prayer?

Now let's look closer at the jewel of prayer and admire it from every angle.

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## Interpretation: Essential Facets of Prayer

“Don’t worry about anything,” Paul urged (Philippians 4:6). Look up the Greek word for “worry,” *merimnao*, in the Greek lexicon available at [billmounce.com](http://billmounce.com) and write its meaning below.

Then look up the verb *worry* in the *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary*. Scroll down and note the dialectal British definition. Paraphrase the command, “Don’t worry about anything,” considering the meanings you found.

Rather than worry, pray. But how do we pray? Paul explained prayer as “petition with thanksgiving” (Philippians 4:6 NET). Look up *petition* in your Bible-study resources or in *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary* at [biblestudytools.com](http://biblestudytools.com). Write down the meaning of the word and its significance to prayer.

*You’re hurting? Cry out! Cry out to your Dad! Tell Him about it. With a thankful spirit for His presence and His ability to lift your load, give it over to Him!*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Paraphrase *Philippians 4:6–7* in one or two sentences below.

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Prayer done right means we, His children, open our hearts to our heavenly Father and tell Him our concerns and everything on our heart.

The primary pitfall to avoid, according to Jesus, is praying to impress others. Read [Matthew 6:5](#) again. Look up the word *hypokrites* in the Greek lexicon at [billmounce.com](#). How does this meaning deepen your understanding of this warning?

*You know what it's saying to us? It's saying, nobody but God needs to know about your prayer life. You don't have to display it. You don't want to brag about it. You don't want to drop little subtle hints. You go into your closet, and it's a private thing, and while you're there, you talk to Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

In [6:9–13](#), Jesus taught us to address God as our Father. What does it mean to call God, Father?

*Even though I'm an adult, I've got a Daddy who says, "Come on, Chuck. Lay that on Me. I love you. Talk to Me." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## **Correlation: The Privilege of Prayer**

In the Old Testament, only the High Priest could access God's presence once a year. On the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), he could enter the Holy of Holies, the innermost part of the tabernacle, to offer sacrifices for himself and for the sins of the people ([Leviticus 16:4–11](#); [Hebrews 9:7](#)).

Jesus opened access to God's holy throne room when He died for our sins and tore the temple veil in two, "from top to bottom" ([Matthew 27:50–52](#)). Now, all who believe in Him can talk to God at any time. In [Hebrews 10:19–22](#), what should be our attitude when we enter heaven's most holy place?

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Compare *Hebrews 4:14–16* with *Matthew 7:7–11*. Based on these two passages, what does God promise to give to those who boldly come to Him?

Read *1 John 5:14–15*. What is the confidence that we have when we approach God?

*Tell God all that's in your heart, its pleasures and its pains, as to a dear friend. Tell Him your troubles—He'll comfort you. Tell Him your joys—He'll give you perspective. Tell Him your longings—He may purify them. Tell Him your dislikes—He'll help you conquer them. Tell Him your temptations—He'll shield you from them. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## **Application: The Door Is Open! Go In at Any Time!**

No need to knock. No need to rehearse. No need to go to someone else to mediate your entry. The door is open! Let's use the step of *application* to access our Christ-acquired privilege of prayer.

How have you seen God carry your burdens through prayer? Why not write a prayer of thanksgiving to Him?

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What does the Holy Spirit reveal to you to stop or start doing to strengthen your grip on prayer?  
What steps can you take today?

Joseph M. Scriven's life went through a tragic turn when he wrote the hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."<sup>2</sup> Which phrase or sentence in this song touches you the most? Carry this thought with you through your day.

What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged;  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness;  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our Refuge;  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee;  
Thou wilt find a solace there.

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## A FINAL PRAYER

The cross of Jesus Christ laid under our feet a red carpet to God's holy throne room. We have freedom from formalism, ritualism, shame, and guilt. Child of God, the door is open! Boldly go in right now. Record your prayerful response below.

## ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
2. Joseph Scriven, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," in *The Celebration Hymnal: Songs and Hymns for Worship* (n.p.: Word/Integrity, 1997), hymn 630.

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1981, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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