

Principles of Prayer

Charles G. Finney

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Week 1

Day 1 – Introduction

1. The author states on page 13 regarding Finney's "Principles": "...*principles that are true to the clear teaching of Scripture, that are sound, reasonable, and that have been verified by experience.*" Do Scripture and experience work together in your spiritual growth? If so, how?
2. The author states on page 13: "*God's Word and prayer will unlock the door to valuable service in the Kingdom of God for every Christian today just as they did for Finney and the Christians who supported his work.*" What does that statement mean to you?

Day 2 - The Truth and Prayer

1. Finney writes on page 18: "*When I speak of moving God, I do not mean that God's mind is change by prayer, or that His disposition or character is changed. But prayer produces such a change in us...*" Reflect on what this means to you. Have you ever experienced this? Exactly what do you think Finney means in this statement?
2. Finney writes on page 18: "*Probably in the Day of Judgment it will be found that nothing is ever done by the truth, used ever so zealously, unless there is a spirit of prayer somewhere in connection with the presentation of the truth.*" Reflect on why Finney would bring up the "Day of Judgment" in connection to prayer.

Day 3 - Pray for Something Definite

1. On page 20, Finney makes the case for the key to effectual prayer. What is that key? Do you agree or disagree with Finney's position?
2. What did Finney mean by "...*fasten its desires intensely.*"? How would or would not your prayers be impacted if you prayed this way?

Day 4 - Pray for the Will of God

1. On page 22, Finney wrote: "*To pray for things contrary to the revealed will of God is to tempt God.*" What do you think he means by "tempting God"?
2. What are the three ways to pray for the will of God? Are any of these things subjective? If they are, how?

Principles of Prayer

Charles G. Finney

Week 1 (cont.)

Day 5 - Pray Submitting to God's Will

1. Discuss how Finney's style of writing is impacting what you are getting out of this study up to this point. Is Finney's style agreeable to you, or are you having a difficult time with it? How would describe Finney's style of writing?
2. Explain what you think Finney's main point is in "submission to the will of God."?
3. Reflect on Finney's point on page 24 regarding a "...*general confidence that God will do what is right.*" What was the context of that statement? What did he mean by that?

Day 6 - Pray With Worthy Desire

1. Explain how you interpret Finney's understanding of "desire" and its role in prayer.
2. Finney makes the case for two reasons for the presumption that one's prayer coupled with desire will be granted: the benevolence of God and personal benevolence for something. Did Finney state that any other condition(s) for answered prayer to be added to these two things? If so, what was it?

Day 7 - Pray With Right Motives

1. Finney gives very specific examples of how he regards some prayers as selfish. What do you think about what he wrote about that kind of praying?
2. How does Finney tell us how we can avoid selfish praying?

Principles of Prayer

Charles G. Finney

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Week 2

Day 8 – Persevere With The Holy Spirit

1. Finney, on page 30 states that it is not possible to pray effectually without the Holy Spirit. What does this mean to you?
2. The last three paragraphs of the section emphasize what prevailing prayer means and what it does not mean. Discuss the points that Finney makes. Is the prevailing with the Holy Spirit implied, or is it not there at all?

Day 9 – Pray Often, Renouncing Sins, In Christ's Name

1. The section deals with all three areas that are indicated in the title in close succession: a) Pray Often b) Renouncing Sins c) In Christ's Name
2. Pray Often: Finney makes the case that to pray effectually, you must pray often. Is there any Biblical basis for that? What Scriptures refer to praying often?
3. Renouncing Sins: What do you think Finney is trying to get across here? What does it mean to "renounce" something?
4. In Christ's Name: Read John 16:23-28. How does that match with what Finney wrote?

Day 10 – Pray In Faith

1. Finney wrote that he believed that the way to pray in "faith" is through the promises in God's Word, through God's providence, and by way of the Holy Spirit. Discuss the implications of his position. Do you agree or disagree and why?
2. Discuss Finney's question and answer case for following the leading of the Spirit in the face of concerns of fanaticism. Discuss your opinions of his arguments. Do you have anything to add to this discussion?

Day 11 – Why God Requires Strong Desire

1. Finney presents his case for the "travail of the soul", the "burden" upon one's heart and soul, and struggle in the soul. How much does emotion, even strong negative emotion play in one's spiritual experience, or does emotion have no place at all in spiritual experience?
2. Discuss the statement on page 37: "*Christians in the city are so worldly, and have so much starch, pride, and fashion that they cannot 'come down' to such spirituality as this.*" Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

Principles of Prayer

Charles G. Finney

Week 2 (cont.)

Day 12 – Prayer Brings Unity And Blessing

1. Have you ever experienced what Finney described as the “*bond of union*” between Christ and the Church after spending an extensive period of seeking God through prayer? If you have, describe what it felt like and the kind of impact it may have had upon you.
2. What were your thoughts as you read Finney’s discussion about having to receive the blessing from prayer “*through the depth of agony*”?
3. Do you think pride truly can interrupt prayer? Why or why not?

Day 13 – A Final Remark

1. What does the statement on page 41 mean: “...*they do not follow them up.*”?
2. Discuss the importance of prayer and ministry. Is prayer that important? Why or why not?

Day 14 – What To Believe When You Pray

1. What place, if any, does believing that what we pray for we will in deed have, have?
2. Is Finney talking about a “name it claim it” kind of belief?
3. How does this section match with the other sections we have read so far?

Principles of Prayer

Charles G. Finney

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Week 3

Day 15 – Pray For God’s Promises

1. The author of Hebrews wrote in 11:1: *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”* How does that Scripture match up against Finney’s assertion: *“Faith must always have evidence. A man cannot believe a thing unless he sees something which he supposes to be evidence.”*?
2. Reflect and discuss Finney’s discussion concerning believing the Biblical promises, both specific and general.

Day 16 – Pray For Prophetic Declarations

1. What were the conditions which Daniel was under, referred to by Finney in which he interpreted the Scriptural prophecy? Specifically, which prophetic book did Daniel draw his conclusion from?
2. Is there a particular Biblical prophecy that you have wondered whether or not you should pray about? What might be holding you back from praying over that prophecy (if indeed you are holding back)?

Day 17 – Pray When Signs Indicate A Blessing

1. What types of indications of Providence do you think Finney is referring to in this section? Have you seen any indications of Providence? If you have, what did you do and how did it impact you?
2. Finney states that when the Spirit of God excites you for a particular blessing, *“... you are bound to believe it...”*. Does Finney place any kinds of conditions by which to gauge when the Spirit excites you? Are there any other conditions that should be considered?

Day 18 – Prayers Of Faith Obtain Their Object

1. Share when you have seen God answer prayer. Have you experienced what Finney described as more than what you prayed for?
2. Do you think it is God’s will to answer prayer? Why or why not?

Day 19 – How To Pray A Prayer Of Faith

1. Based upon Finney’s discussion, what do you think he meant when he wrote: *“You must first obtain evidence that God will bestow the blessing.”*?

Week 3 (cont.)

Principles of Prayer

Charles G. Finney

2. What are your thoughts in regards to Finney's thought that the "good desires" as coming from the Holy Spirit as a Christian?

Day 20 – The Prayer Of Faith (continued)

1. Up to this point, Finney has not placed any restrictions upon receiving blessing when praying the prayer of faith except for faith and earnest desire. However in this section, Finney adds another condition: "*Entire consecration to God is indispensable to the prayer of faith.*" Do you agree or disagree with this statement and why?
2. Finney adds "*perseverance*" to the prayer of faith. In what way did Daniel show perseverance in seeking God through prayer?
3. Are you persevering through this study? Why or why not?

Day 21 – Why We Need The Holy Spirit

1. What are the ways Finney lists that we need the Holy Spirit?
2. Is there any one of these in particular do you find most helpful?

Principles of Prayer

Charles G. Finney

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Week 4

Day 22 – The Holy Spirit and Scripture

1. Finney makes the case that it is “wonderful” that Christians have not been able to fully apply the Scriptures to the events of life. He then goes on to explain why he believes that. What is his reasoning here?
2. Do you agree with this position, and if you do, how have you seen what he says come true in your life?

Day 23 – The Holy Spirit and Salvation

1. Finney discusses the concept of the praying person “travailing in birth” in referring to people who are led by the Holy Spirit to pray for another’s salvation. What does that concept mean to you?
2. Have you ever experienced “travailing in birth” while praying for someone’s salvation? If you have not, should you? Why or why not?

Day 24 – The Holy Spirit and Providence

1. Finney states that are those “devoted, praying Christians” that see God’s providential hand going to make something happen, when no one else sees it. Why do you think he qualifies such individuals as “devoted and praying Christians”? Is this a qualification in order to “see” what God is doing?
2. Should we be asking God for the kind of discernment that Finney talks about? If so, aren’t you afraid of being “wrong” sometimes? How do you protect from that?

Day 25 – Distinguishing The Holy Spirit

1. Is it Biblical for Christians to be led directly by God? Why or why not? If so, what’s stopping you?
2. Explain Finney’s example of when you can see the evidence of the Holy Spirit leading you. Share your own experiences.

Day 26 – Distinguishing The Spirit (continued)

1. Discuss Finney’s concept that the Spirit “enlightens the intelligence”. What did he mean by that? What place do “impressions” have?
2. Finney states there is an “influence” that we should readily yield to in that he believes it always from the Holy Spirit. What “influence” is that (hint: look at the last two paragraphs).

Principles of Prayer

Charles G. Finney

Day 27 – To Receive The Spirit's Influence

1. The author retells a story of a professor of religion's attempt at seeking the Holy Spirit. What was the author's explanation of why the professor was not receiving with he was looking for? What are the implications of this in our lives?
2. What does Finney say we should aim for everyday? If someone doesn't aim at this target what does this mean?

Day 28 – Prayer and the Church

1. What are the 3 classes of people in the church who are liable for error? Why are they liable for error? Do you see any of these same influences today?
2. Finney tells a story about how he discovered how a particular minister had revival hit his church for 14 consecutive years. What was that secret? What kind of church did Finney say that pastor had?

Week 5

Day 29 – You May and Must Have The Spirit

1. What are the reasons why we should have the Holy Spirit? Which of these resonate with you and which do not?
2. Consider the statement: "There is no stopping short of the conclusion that God is tyrannical if He commands that which is impractical." What are the implications of this statement and do you agree with that statement?

Day 30 – What Prevents Your Being Filled

1. What are the seven possible reasons for not being filled with the Spirit? Do you see any of these as a part of your life?
2. What can we do to vanquish each of the seven reasons why we are not filled with the Spirit?

Day 31 – Results of Being Filled

1. Consider Finney's concept of the "eccentricity" of being filled with the Spirit. How does this concept relate to Scripture passages such as Matthew 5:13-16 and I John 2:15-17?
2. Finney says that once filled with the Spirit, you will feel great distress. How does that match against mainstream American Christianity's view?

Day 32 – Results of Being Filled (continued)

1. Consider the passage of Scripture cited II Timothy 3:12, within it's context of the whole chapter of II Timothy 3. What does that passage say to you

Principles of Prayer

Charles G. Finney

in light of Finney's concept that we will face opposition from within and from without if we are filled?

2. A man once said, "I think the devil prefers to be in some churches rather than in places like prisons." Consider Finney's concept of opposition coming from within the church. Share your thoughts.

Day 33 – The State of the Ministry

1. Over the last 30 years, much has been publicized about high profile ministers and ministries that have not put Christianity in a positive light. Do Finney's concepts here illumine your understanding of those ministries at all and why those things happened to those ministers?
2. Think about our church... now consider Finney's last statement in this section. Should we take such a responsibility upon ourselves?

Day 34 – The Blessings of Being Filled

1. Consider the seven blessings of being filled. Have you, or are you experiencing any of these?
2. Finney tells of a sick, home-bound man who gave himself to prayer. Does this story speak to you in any way?

Day 35 – The Effects of Spiritual Emptiness

1. Consider the nine effects of spiritual emptiness. Are there more than the nine listed that you know of? Are there less than the nine? Match these against the seven blessings of being filled. Compare and contrast.
2. Consider the ninth of the nine effects... do you agree or disagree with this statement and why? Does your position stand in agreement with what the Bible says about the subject?

Week 6

Day 36 – Necessity of Divine Influence

1. What does Finney say he has "erred" on?
2. Do we err the same way?

Day 37 – True Christianity

1. Fill in the blanks: "...true Christianity is always and necessarily the spirit of _____, of _____, of _____, of _____...". Where do you see "true Christianity" lived out today?
2. Read the second to the last paragraph of the section. Discuss amongst yourselves the implications of this paragraph and apply it to everyday life.

Principles of Prayer

Charles G. Finney

Day 38 – Purpose of Public Prayer

1. What are the 4 purposes of public prayer, which one do you deem as most important? Which one(s) have you personally experienced?
2. How can our “public prayer” times be enhanced in services at MHPC? Do you pray out loud during the prayer time when given the opportunity? Why or why not?

Day 39 – How to Conduct Public Prayer AND Hindrances to Public Prayer

1. Describe what Finney referred to as “an insult to God” in public prayer meetings. Why would he say it is an insult? Do you agree or disagree?
2. Finney lists 12 hindrances to prayer. What are they? Have you ever seen any of these in a public prayer meeting at MHPC or some other church? Why do you think Finney places such an emphasis upon the person leading the prayer meeting; aren't we just there to pray anyway?

Day 40 – The Necessity of Public Prayer

1. Finney essentially makes the case that the barometer for the state of the spiritual condition of the church is in whether or not there are prayer meetings in a church, and what happens at the prayer meetings of the church. Consider Finney's case and compare it to our church. Where are we succeeding and where do we need to focus more effort?
2. What are to Finney the most important meetings in the church? Why do you think he believes that? Consider together if the Holy Spirit is speaking to you about giving yourself more to prayer, and share your thoughts with one another.