

# **PRAYER**

## **QUESTIONS AND SCRIPTURES**

1. Are there different ways to pray?

Yes, prayer can be private or public, at a church service, spoken or silent. (Samuel 1:1–20; 1 Kings 8:22–61; Psalm 142; Matthew 11:25–28; Mark 1:35–39; Luke 6:12–16; Hebrews 5:7–10)

2. What are the various types of prayers in the Lord's Prayer?

Praise, petition, intercession and confession to God. (Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4).

3. What is praise?

In praise, I glorify and adore God for his holiness, his sovereign rule over all, and his salvation given in Jesus Christ. (Exodus 15:1–21; Psalm 111; Luke 1:39–56; Ephesians 1:3–14)

4. What is petition?

In petition, I make requests to God on my own behalf for his provision and protection. (1 Samuel 1; 2 Kings 20:1–7; Psalm 86; John 17:1–5; 2 Corinthians 12:1–10; Philippians 4:6–7)

5. What is intercession?

In intercession, I make requests to God on behalf of others, the Church, and the world. (Exodus 32:1–14; Psalm 20; John 17:6–26; Ephesians 3:14–21; 6:18–20)

6. What is confession?

In confession, I acknowledge my sins in repentance before God and receive his forgiveness. (Nehemiah 1:4–11; Psalm 51; Jeremiah 36:1–3; Luke 23:39–43; Acts 2:14–41; 2 Corinthians 7:2–12; 1 John 1:9)

7. What types of prayer are not included in the Lord's Prayer?

Other types of prayer are thanksgiving, by which I give thanks to God for his providential goodness and answers to my prayers; and oblation, by which I offer to him all that I am and all that I do. (2 Samuel 22; Psalm 63; Luke 1:38; 22:39–44; Romans 12:1; Hebrews 10:1–25; 13:15–16)

8. With what attitude should you pray?

I should pray with humility, love, and a ready openness to hear and do God's will. (2 Chronicles 7:13-15; Psalms 31; 46:10-11; Luke 18:9-14; Philippians 4:4-7)

9. What prayers should you learn as a part of your rule of prayer?

After learning the Lord's Prayer, I should next aim to learn certain psalms (such as Psalm 23, Psalm 51, Psalm 95, Psalm 100, Psalm 150) and prayers from the Daily Office. These prayers will ground me in the Christian tradition of prayer and teach me how to pray in my own words.

10. What should you remember when prayers seem to go unanswered?

I should be certain that God always hears my prayers and answers them by his wisdom, in his own time and manner, for my good, and for his glory. (Psalm 37:3-9; Isaiah 55; Habakkuk 3:17-19; Luke 18:1-8; James 4:2-3; 1 John 5:14-15)

11. How should you pray in times of suffering?

I should pray trusting in the sufficiency of God's grace and in joyful assurance that "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame." (Romans 5:3-5; see also Job 23; Psalm 22; John 12:23-26; 2 Corinthians 1:3-5; 1 Peter 4:12-19)

12. Is it acceptable to repeatedly pray for the same thing?

In Luke 18:1-7, Jesus uses a parable to illustrate the importance of persevering in prayer. He tells the story of a widow who came to an unjust judge seeking justice against her adversary. Because of her persistence in prayer, the judge relented. Jesus' point is that if an unjust judge will grant the petition of someone who perseveres in a request for justice, how much more will the God who loves us—"his chosen ones" (v. 7)—answer our prayer when we keep praying? The parable does not teach, as is mistakenly thought, that if we pray for something over and over, God is obligated to give it to us. Rather, God promises to avenge His own, to vindicate them, right their wrongs, do them justice, and deliver them from their adversaries. He does this because of His justice, His holiness, and His hatred of sin; in answering prayer, He keeps His promises and displays His power.

Jesus gives another illustration of prayer in Luke 11:5-12. Similar to the parable of the unjust judge, Jesus' message in this passage is that if a man will inconvenience himself to provide for a needy friend, God will provide for our needs far more, since no request is an inconvenience to Him. Here again, the promise is not that we will receive whatever we ask if we just keep asking. God's promise to His children is a promise to meet our needs, not our wants. And He knows our needs better than we do. The same promise is reiterated in Matthew 7:7-11 and in Luke 11:13, where the "good gift" is further explained to be the Holy Spirit.

Both of these passages encourage us to pray and to keep praying. There is nothing wrong with repeatedly asking for the same thing. As long as what you are praying for is within the will of God (James 4:3; 1 John 5:14-15), keep asking until God grants your request or removes the desire from your heart. Sometimes God forces us to wait for an answer to our prayers in order to teach us patience and perseverance. Sometimes we ask for something when granting it is not yet in God's timing for our lives. Sometimes we ask for something that is not God's will for us, and He says "no." Prayer is not only our presenting requests to God; it is God's presenting His will to our hearts. Keep on asking, keep on knocking, and keep on seeking until God grants your request or convinces you that your request is not His will for you.

Prayer is an incredible privilege for the Christian, as we are invited by the Creator of the universe to come "boldly" into His presence (Hebrews 4:16) and communicate with Him. Prayer is the means by which we praise Him, adore Him, give thanks to Him, submit to Him, and bring before Him petitions for ourselves and intercessions for others. It's hard to see how that intimate communion with Him is enhanced by repeating simple prayers over and over again, especially found in particular religions.

13. What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name?

Prayer in Jesus' name is taught in John 14:13-14, "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." Some misapply this verse, thinking that saying "in Jesus' name" at the end of a prayer results in God's always granting what is asked for. This is essentially treating the words "in Jesus' name" as a magic formula. This is absolutely unbiblical.

Praying in Jesus' name means praying with His authority and asking God the Father to act upon our prayers because we come in the name of His Son, Jesus. Praying in Jesus' name means the same thing as praying according to the will of God, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if

we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him” (1 John 5:14-15). Praying in Jesus’ name is praying for things that will honor and glorify Jesus.

Saying “in Jesus’ name” at the end of a prayer is not a magic formula. If what we ask for or say in prayer is not for God’s glory and according to His will, saying “in Jesus’ name” is meaningless. Genuinely praying in Jesus’ name and for His glory is what is important, not attaching certain words to the end of a prayer. It is not the words in the prayer that matter, but the purpose behind the prayer. Praying for things that are in agreement with God’s will is the essence of praying in Jesus’ name.

#### 14. Silent prayer - is it biblical?

The Bible gives an example of silent prayer in Hannah’s inaudible petition (1 Samuel 1:10, 13), but it does not give specific instructions on praying silently. That does not mean that silent prayer is any less valid than praying out loud—Hannah’s prayer was answered, after all. God can hear our thoughts just as easily as He can hear our words (Psalm 139:23; Jeremiah 12:3). Jesus knew the evil thoughts of the Pharisees (Matthew 12:24-26; Luke 11:17). Nothing we do, say, or think is hidden from God, who does not need to hear our words to know our thoughts. He has access to all prayers directed to Him, whether or not they are spoken.

The Bible mentions praying in private (Matthew 6:6). What is the difference between praying aloud or silently if you are by yourself? There are some circumstances where only silent prayer is appropriate, e.g., praying for something that needs to stay between you and God only, praying for someone who is present, etc. There is not anything wrong with praying silently, as long as you are not doing it because you are embarrassed to be heard praying.

Perhaps the best verse to indicate the validity of unspoken prayers is 1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Pray without ceasing.” To pray unceasingly obviously cannot mean we are praying out loud all of the time. Rather, it means we are to be in a constant state of God-consciousness, where we take every thought captive to Him (2 Corinthians 10:5) and bring every situation, plan, fear, or concern before His throne. Unceasing prayer will include prayers that are spoken, whispered, shouted, sung, and silent as we direct our thoughts of praise, petition, supplication, and thanksgiving to God.

## 15. What does it mean to pray without ceasing?

Paul's command in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to "pray without ceasing," can be confusing. Obviously, it cannot mean we are to be in a head-bowed, eyes-closed posture all day long. Paul is not referring to non-stop talking, but rather an attitude of God-consciousness and God-surrender that we carry with us all the time. Every waking moment is to be lived in an awareness that God is with us and that He is actively involved and engaged in our thoughts and actions.

When our thoughts turn to worry, fear, discouragement, and anger, we are to consciously and quickly turn every thought into prayer and every prayer into thanksgiving. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul commands us to stop being anxious and instead, "in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6). He taught the believers at Colossae to devote themselves "to prayer, being watchful and thankful" (Colossians 4:2). Paul exhorted the Ephesian believers to see prayer as a weapon to use in fighting spiritual battles (Ephesians 6:18). As we go through the day, prayer should be our first response to every fearful situation, every anxious thought, and every undesired task that God commands. A lack of prayer will cause us to depend on ourselves instead of depending on God's grace. Unceasing prayer is, in essence, continual dependence upon and communion with the Father.

For Christians, prayer should be like breathing. You do not have to think to breathe because the atmosphere exerts pressure on your lungs and essentially forces you to breathe. That is why it is more difficult to hold your breath than it is to breathe. Similarly, when we are born into the family of God, we enter into a spiritual atmosphere where God's presence and grace exert pressure, or influence, on our lives. Prayer is the normal response to that pressure. As believers, we have all entered the divine atmosphere to breathe the air of prayer. Continual, persistent, incessant prayer is an essential part of Christian living and flows out of humility and dependence on God.

## 16. How is prayer communicating with God?

To understand the nature of God's communication to us, and ours to Him, we need to start with a few key precepts. The first is that God only speaks truth. He never lies, and He is never deceitful. Job 34:12 declares, "It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice." The second precept is that the Bible is God's very words. The Greek word for "Scripture," *graphe*, is used 51 times in the New Testament to describe the Old Testament writings. Paul affirms in 2 Timothy 3:16 that these words are literally "breathed out by God." The word *graphe* also

applies to the New Testament, specifically when Peter calls Paul's epistles "scripture" in 2 Peter 3:16, and also when Paul (in 1 Timothy 5:18) quotes Jesus' words as found in Luke 10:7 and calls them "scripture." Thus, once we establish that a New Testament writing belongs in the special category "scripture," then we are correct in applying 2 Timothy 3:16 to that writing as well, and saying that that writing also has the characteristics Paul attributes to "all scripture." It is "God-breathed," and all its words are the very words of God.

Why is this information pertinent to the subject of prayer? Now that we have established that God only speaks truth and that the Bible is God's very words, we can come logically to the following two conclusions about communication with God. First, since the Bible says that God hears man (Psalm 17:6, 77:1; Isaiah 38:5), man can trust that when he is in a right relationship with God and he speaks to God, God will hear him. Second, since the Bible is God's words, man can trust that when he is in a right relationship with God and he reads the Bible, he is literally hearing God's spoken word. The right relationship with God that is necessary for healthy communication between God and man is evidenced in three ways. The first is a turning from sin, or repentance. Psalm 27:9, for example, is the plea of David for God to hear him and not turn away from him in anger. From this, we know that God does turn His face away from man's sin and that sin hinders the communication between God and man. Another example of this is found in Isaiah 59:2, where Isaiah tells the people, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." So, when there is unconfessed sin in our lives, it will hinder communication with God.

Also necessary for communication is a humble heart. God speaks these words in Isaiah 66:2, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." The third thing is a righteous life. This is the positive side of turning from sin and is marked specifically by effectiveness in prayer. James 5:16 says, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

Our speech to God may be vocal, in our minds, or written. We can be confident that He will hear us and that the Holy Spirit will help us to pray what we ought to pray. Romans 8:26 says, "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."

As far as God's method of communicating back to us, we should be looking for God to speak to us primarily through Scripture, rather than trusting that God will always put thoughts directly into our minds in order to guide us to specific actions or decisions. Because of our capacity for self-deception, it is

not wise to accept the idea that any and every thought that enters our minds is from God. Sometimes, regarding specific issues in our lives, God does not speak to us directly through Scripture, and it can be understandably tempting to look for extra-biblical revelation in those instances. However, at such times, it is wisest—in order to avoid putting words in God’s mouth and/or opening ourselves to deception—to find answers by referring to biblical principles that He has already given us.

It is also advisable to pray earnestly for the wisdom to come to the right conclusions, for He has promised to give wisdom to those who ask for it. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him” (James 1:5). How is prayer communicating with God? Prayer is our speaking from our hearts to our heavenly Father, and, in return, God’s speaking to us through His Word and guiding us by the leading of His Spirit.

17. Do I have to pray before I eat?

Jesus provided us an example when He gave thanks and broke the loaves (Matthew 14:19) and while He was eating, Jesus took the bread, gave thanks and broke it (Matthew 26:26). This follows the Jewish tradition of “B’rakhah” which is giving thanks to God for providing the meal. We can bless our food, but more importantly, we should bless God for providing our daily bread, as well as for our daily needs. As Paul says in Colossians 3:17, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

18. What is the power of prayer?"

The idea that power is inherent in prayer is a very popular one. According to the Bible, the power of prayer is, quite simply, the power of God, who hears and answers prayer. Consider the following:

A) The Lord God Almighty can do all things; there is nothing impossible for Him (Luke 1:37).

B) The Lord God Almighty invites His people to pray to Him. Prayer to God should be made persistently (Luke 18:1), with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6), in faith (James 1:5), within the will of God (Matthew 6:10), for the glory of God (John 14:13-14), and from a heart right with God (James 5:16).

C) The Lord God Almighty hears the prayers of His children. He commands us to pray, and He promises to listen when we do. "In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears" (Psalm 18:6).

D) The Lord God Almighty answers prayer. "I call on you, O God, for you will answer me" (Psalm 17:6). "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles" (Psalm 34:17).

Another popular idea is that the amount of faith we have determines whether or not God will answer our prayers. However, sometimes the Lord answers our prayers in spite of our own lack of faith. In Acts 12, the church prays for Peter's release from prison (v. 5), and God answers their prayer (vv. 7-11). Peter goes to the door of the prayer meeting and knocks, but those who are praying refuse at first to believe that it is really Peter. They prayed he would be released, but they failed to expect an answer to their prayers.

The power of prayer does not flow from us; it is not special words we say or the special way we say them or even how often we say them. The power of prayer is not based on a certain direction we face or a certain position of our bodies. The power of prayer does not come from the use of artifacts or icons or candles or beads. The power of prayer comes from the omnipotent One who hears our prayers and answers them. Prayer places us in contact with Almighty God, and we should expect almighty results, whether or not He chooses to grant our petitions or deny our requests. Whatever the answer to our prayers, the God to whom we pray is the source of the power of prayer, and He can and will answer us, according to His perfect will and timing.

19. What things should I pray for?

Pray about everything (Philippians 4:6-7), pray all the time (1 Thessalonians 5:17), pray fervently (James 5:16), pray boldly (James 1:6-8; Hebrews 4:16), pray confidently (1 John 5:14).

First, we pray for ourselves then turn our focus to our friends, our family, our co-workers, our neighbors, the congregation at church, our life groups, the staff (Including their spouses).



Use this guide as a starting point, or pray the scripture out loud as a Powerful Prayer Strategy.

- H – Pray that Hearts will be softened to receive a word from God (Ezekiel 36:26; Luke 8:5-15)
- E – Pray that our spiritual Eyes and Ears will be open to receive and apply the truth God speaks. (Acts 26:18; Matthew 13:15)
- A – Pray that our Attitudes will be adjusted to see sin as God sees sin. (Luke 15:7; James 2:10)
- R – Pray that lives will be Released from strongholds, footholds, and snares of the enemy that keep us from following God fully surrendered. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:25-26)
- T – Pray that lives will be Transformed from living as Christian in name only to living as true disciples of Christ. (John 8:31-32; 1 John 2: 3-6)
- S – Pray that we would Stand united; one as the Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:10; Colossians 3:13-14; John 17:23)

## 12. Why do we end our prayers with 'Amen'?

The Hebrew word translated "amen" literally means "truly" or "so be it." "Amen" is also found in the Greek New Testament and has the same meaning. Nearly half of the Old Testament uses of amen are found in the book of Deuteronomy. In each case, the people are responding to curses pronounced by God on various sins. Each pronouncement is followed by the words "and all the people shall say Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:15-26). This indicates that the people applauded the righteous sentence handed down by their holy God, responding, "So let it be." The amen attested to the conviction of the hearers that the sentences which they heard were true, just, and certain.

Seven of the Old Testament references link amen with praise. The sentence "Then all the people said 'Amen' and 'Praise the LORD,'" found in 1 Chronicles 16:36, typifies the connection between amen and praise. In Nehemiah 5:13 and 8:6, the people of Israel affirm Ezra's exalting of God by worshiping the Lord and obeying Him. The highest expression of praise to God is obedience, and when we say "amen" to His commands and pronouncements, our praise is sweet music to His ears.

The New Testament writers all use "amen" at the end of their epistles. The apostle John uses it at the end of his gospel, his three letters, and the book of Revelation, where it appears nine times. Each time it is connected with praising and glorifying God and referring to the second coming and the end of the age. Paul says "amen" to the blessings he pronounces on all the churches in his letters to them, as do Peter, John and Jude in their letters. The implication is that they are saying, "May it be that the Lord will truly grant these blessings upon you."

When Christians say "amen" at the end of our prayers, we are following the model of the apostles, asking God to "please let it be as we have prayed." Remembering the connection between amen and the praise of obedience, all prayers should be prayed according to the will of God. Then when we say "amen," we can be confident that God will respond "so be it" and grant our requests (John 14:13; 1 John 5:14).