

Prayer

Prayer is part of an integrated life of walking with God, in love.

*"God is spirit, and those who worship Him
must worship in spirit and truth."*

A significant part of what the Bible says about prayer addresses how prayer integrates with our entire lives—our hearts, our minds, and our actions.

A. An Overview of Prayer

1. Prayer can involve

- a. Praise – Hebrews 13:15; many Psalms
- b. Requests (or supplication)
 - i. Guidance – Psalm 27:11; Psalm 139:24
 - ii. Wisdom – James 1:5
 - iii. Sustenance – Matthew 6:11
 - iv. Deliverance – Matthew 6:13, James 5:13
 - v. Holiness – Matthew 6:10; John 17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23
 - vi. Peace – Philippians 4:6-7
 - vii. Healing – James 5:14-15
 - viii. Holy Spirit – Luke 11:13 (compare with Matthew version, “good gifts”)
- c. Thanksgiving – Hebrews 13:15; Paul in most of his epistles
- d. Listening – Ecclesiastes 5:1-7; In Acts, when they had visions or heard the Holy Spirit speaking to them, it was while praying.
- e. Confession – 1 John 1:8

2. How to pray – Matthew 6:9-13

⁹Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread.

¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]”

B. Prayer is part of an integrated life, and as such must meet certain conditions to be effective.

1. Prayer must be according to God's will.

a. John 4:20-24

b. Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

c. Prayer is a good example of a subject that requires the whole counsel of scripture to avoid errors.

i. Matthew 18:19-20

"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

ii. John 16:23

"In that day you will not question Me about anything Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you."

2. Prayer must be from faith.

a. Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

b. James 1:5-8

⁵But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

⁶But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

⁷For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,

⁸being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

3. Prayer must be from right motives.

a. James 4:3

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

b. "Do you ever wonder just what God requires? You think He's just an errand boy to satisfy your wandering desires." (Bob Dylan, *When You Gonna Wake Up?*)

4. Prayer must be done with humility.

a. Luke 18:9-14

b. James 4:6

But He gives a greater grace Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

c. Two prayers I've noticed that God seems to like to answer:

i. "Show me my heart."

- ii. "Show me your heart for " (somebody else).

C. Things That Can Hinder Our Prayers

1. An Unbiblical View of God's Nature

- a. God is omnipotent – "God's will is always done."

- i. We are told to pray "Thy will be done."

- ii. Luke 7:30

But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves... (NKJV)

- b. God is omniscient, therefore He knows how I feel about Him and I don't have to say it.

We are

- c. God is outside of time.

2. An Unbiblical View of God's Character

- a. We doubt God's mercy.

- i. Hebrews 4:15-16

¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

¹⁶Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- b. We confuse "condemnation" with "conviction."

- i. Conviction

- a. Is always *specific* – because sin is a choice of transgression against the law. The Holy Spirit will always convict us specifically because we always sin specifically.

- b. It always points you to the cross. The Holy Spirit convicts you so that you can be forgiven and set free.

- c. It always leaves you with a sense of joy.

- ii. Condemnation

- a. Is vague.

- b. It points you to yourself.

- c. It leaves you with a sense of despair

- iii. If you feel condemnation, resist it as coming from yourself or the enemy.

- a. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1)

- b. "God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved."

- iv. "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." (Romans 8:33-35)
 - c. We have a distorted view of God's holiness.
 - i. 1 John 1:5-7
 - ⁵This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.
 - ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;
 - ⁷but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.
 - ii. Proverbs 15:8
 - The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight.
 - iii. Proverbs 15:29
 - The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.
 - iv. Proverbs 28:9
 - He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination.
 - v. Isaiah 1:15
 - "So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood."
 - vi. Matthew 5:23-24
 - ²³"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,
 - ²⁴leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."
 - d. We think God's love is arbitrary.
 - i. Matthew 6:7
 - "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.
 - ii. God does not respond to us because we use many words.
 - iii. God does not respond to us because we say, "in Jesus' name" at the end of our prayer.
 - This is akin to the pagan view of their gods, that chanting certain words will bring a response.
3. We have an unbiblical view of our nature and character.
- a. A metaphysical view of sin will cause us to always be asking God to remove our sin—the very thing He requires us to do.
 - i. 1 John 1:6-7
 - ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

- ⁷but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.
- ii. 1 John 3:7
Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous
 - b. Paul's prayers in his epistles are that God will grant people the knowledge of His love that will lead to their holiness (which is contingent on their response in faith).
4. We have an unbiblical view of how God governs us.
- a. God desires obedience, not sacrifice.
 - i. Hosea 6:6
For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.
 - ii. Hebrews 12:28
Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;
(contrasted with the old temple system of worship and sacrifice)
 - iii. Hebrews 13:15
Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.
 - iv. Hebrews 9:8-14
 - b. If God knows our needs, why do we have to ask?
 - i. God respects our free will and lets us decide if we want to walk in His love and continually receive the benefits of His government.
 - ii. Many of us spent our whole lives rejecting God's will, on an ongoing basis, now we have to invite Him back on an ongoing basis, we can't just say one prayer that is good for the rest of our lives.
 - iii. James 4:2
You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.
5. We are praying for unbiblical things.
- a. We ask God not to punish the wicked.
 - b. We ask God to make our friend or family member repent.
 - c. We ask God to make us stop sinning.
 - d. We ask God to help someone when we ought to help them.
 - e. 1 John 5:16
If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him

give life to those who commit sin not leading to death There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.

- f. It may be appropriate to finish a questionable prayer with, “yet not My will, but Yours be done.” (Luke 22:42)
- g. Healing is not guaranteed.
 - i. The physical body will eventually die because of sin.
 - ii. God *does* work miracles, but they are the exception to the rule. God is also committed to the rules—He made them, that is, the physical laws by which He governs creation.
 - iii. Most New Testament miracles seem to be “attesting miracles” used by God to witness to the truth of the Gospel.

Prayer

(New American Standard Bible)

Proverbs 15:8

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

Proverbs 15:29

The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

Proverbs 28:9

He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

¹Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil.

²Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.

³For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words.

⁴When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools Pay what you vow!

⁵It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.

⁶Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands?

⁷For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, fear God.

Isaiah 1:15

"So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood."

Jeremiah 7:16-18

¹⁶"As for you, do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you.

¹⁷"Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

¹⁸"The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods in order to spite Me."

Matthew 5:23-24

²³"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

²⁴leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

[See Hebrews 13:15 regarding New Covenant style offerings or sacrifice.]

Matthew 5:44

"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,"

Matthew 6:5-15

⁵"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

⁶"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

⁷"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

⁸"So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

⁹"Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹'Give us this day our daily bread.

¹²'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]'

¹⁴"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵"But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Matthew 7:7

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

Matthew 14:23

After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

Matthew 17:21

["But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."]

Matthew 18:18-20

¹⁸"Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

¹⁹"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

²⁰"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

Matthew 21:22

"And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

Matthew 23:14

[" Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.]

Matthew 26:42

He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."

Mark 9:29

And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

Mark 11:25

"Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions."

Mark 12:38-40

³⁸In His teaching He was saying: "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places,

³⁹and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets,

⁴⁰who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation."

Luke 6:12 [Choosing the Twelve]

It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

Luke 11:1-13

¹It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."

²And He said to them, "When you pray, say:

'Father, hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

³Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴And forgive us our sins,

For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation."

⁵Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves;

⁶for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him';

⁷and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.'

⁸"I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

⁹"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

¹⁰"For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

¹¹"Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he?

¹²"Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?

¹³"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Luke 18:1-8

¹Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

²saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.

³"There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.'

⁴"For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, ⁵yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'"

⁶And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said;

⁷now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

⁸"I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Luke 18:9-14

⁹And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

¹¹"The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

¹²'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

¹³"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

¹⁴"I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

John 4:20-24

²⁰"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

²²"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

²³"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

²⁴"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

John 16:23

"In that day you will not question Me about anything Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you."

John 17**Acts 1:14**

These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 2:42

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 6:4

"But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Acts 10:4

And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God."

Romans 10:1

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.

Romans 12:10-13

¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

¹¹not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

¹²rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,

¹³contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

1 Corinthians 7:5

Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

1 Corinthians 11:4-5, 13

⁴Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.

⁵But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.

¹³Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

1 Corinthians 14:14-15

¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

¹⁵What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.

Ephesians 1:16

do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;

Ephesians 6:18

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:9-12

⁹For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

¹⁰so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

¹¹strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously

¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

Colossians 4:2-4

²Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;

³praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

⁴that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

Colossians 4:12

Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 4:15-16

¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

¹⁶Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 5:7

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Hebrews 13:15

Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

James 1:5-8

⁵But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

⁶But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

⁷For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,

⁸being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 4:2-3

²You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

James 4:6

But He gives a greater grace Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

James 5:13-16

¹³Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

¹⁵and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

1 Peter 3:7-12

⁷You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

⁸To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

⁹not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

¹⁰For,

"THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS,
MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.

¹¹"HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD;
HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.

¹²"FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS,
AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER,
BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

1 Peter 4:7

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

1 John 5:16

If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.

Revelation 5:8

When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.