

Bible Study on Prayer

by Doug Nichols

All Scripture is taken from New American Standard Bible.

“PRAYING always with all PRAYER” (Ephesians 6:18)

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT PRAYER

- A.** Prayer is worship, praise and requests addressed to the Father (Ephesians 3:14) in the name of Jesus (John 14:13) and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:18).

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father” (Ephesians 3:14).

“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13).

“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” (Ephesians 6:18).

- B.** Prayer is *calling* upon the name of the Lord (Genesis 4:26).

“To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD” (Genesis 4:26).

- C.** Prayer is *simply talking* with the living God.

- D.** Prayer is one of the Christian’s *spiritual weapons* (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” (Ephesians 6:18).

- E.** Prayer is a *privilege* as well as a *responsibility*. One of the greatest mistakes a Christian can make is not to pray.

- F.** Prayer is more than words; it is an *attitude* and *expressions of the heart* in love and gratitude towards God.

- G.** Prayer, in the Bible, consists of at least four parts. They are the *ACTS* of prayer which are:

- 1) **Adoration** – Praise and worship of the soul to God (Psalm 113:1-3; Psalm 95:6).

“Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forever. From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the LORD is to be praised” (Psalm 113:1-3).

“Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker” (Psalm 95:6).

- 2) **Confession** – Repentance of every known sin (Psalm 32:5; Psalm 38:18; 1 John 1:9).

“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah” (Psalm 32:5).

“For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin” (Psalm 38:18).

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

- 3) **Thanksgiving** – To be thankful for anything, everything, and in every situation (Philippians 4:6; Psalm 107:1).

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6).

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting” (Psalm 107:1).

- 4) **Supplication** – Intercession, requests, petitions, and desires (1 Timothy 2:1; Ephesians 6:18).

“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men” (1 Timothy 2:1).

“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” (Ephesians 6:18).

2. LESSONS OF PRAYER

A. WHY should we pray? (reasons for prayer)

- 1) To avoid temptation

“Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

- 2) To not lose heart

“Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart” (Luke 18:1).

- 3) To live a godly life

“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

- 4) For fullness of joy

“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full” (John 16:24).

- 5) For workers for the harvest

“Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest’” (Matthew 9:36-38).

- 6) Because the end is near

“The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer” (1 Peter 4:7).

- 7) Because it sanctifies

“For it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:5).

8) For spiritual battle

“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

“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” (Ephesians 6:18).

9) For healing and forgiveness

“Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is 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; and 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. Therefore, 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. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit” (James 5:13-18).

B. For WHOM are we to pray?

1) For all men

“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

2) For those in authority

“For kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Timothy 2:2).

3) For each other

“Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is 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; and 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. Therefore, 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” (James 5:13-16).

4) For your enemies

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:38-48).

5) For the saints

“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” (Ephesians 6:18).

6) For daily bread

“Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3).

7) For the brother in sin

“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. 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” (1 John 5:14-16).

C. For WHAT are we to pray?

1) For His Kingdom to come

“Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

“And He said to them, When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come’” (Luke 11:2).

2) For our daily bread

“Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11).

“Give us each day our daily bread” (Luke 11:3).

3) For forgiveness

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12).

“And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation” (Luke 11:4).

4) That we will not be tempted

“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” (Matthew 6:13).

“And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation” (Luke 11:4).

5) For guidance

“Always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you” (Romans 1:10).

6) For all our requests

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6).

7) For wisdom

“But 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. But 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” (James 1:5-6).

8) For the spread of the gospel

“Praying 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; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak” (Colossians 4:3-4).

“Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you” (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

9) For complete faith

“As we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith” (1 Thessalonians 3:10).

10) To be counted worthy of your calling

“To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power” (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

11) To do what is right

“Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do

what is right, even though we may appear unapproved” (2 Corinthians 13:7).

12) For love to abound

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment” (Philippians 1:9).

13) For strength from the Holy Spirit

“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16).

14) To be filled with the fullness of God

“And to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).

D. WHERE are we to pray?

1) In every place

“Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension” (1 Timothy 2:8).

2) In secret

“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” (Matthew 6:6).

3) Among other believers

“My foot stands on a level place; in the congregations I shall bless the LORD” (Psalm 26:12).

“Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:25).

E. WHEN are we to pray? (habits of prayer)

1) At all times

“Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart” (Luke 18:1).

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

2) In the morning

“In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch” (Psalm 5:3).

3) In the morning, noon and evening

“Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, and He will hear my voice” (Psalm 55:17).

4) In the day and night

“O LORD, the God of my salvation, I have cried out by day and in the night before You” (Psalm 88:1).

5) All day long

“Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to You I cry all day long” (Psalm 86:3).

F. HOW are we to pray?

1) With help from the Spirit

“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27).

2) With faith

“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 11:6).

3) Without losing heart

“It 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.’ And He said to them, When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread’” (Luke 11:1-3)

“Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, “Give me legal protection from my opponent.” For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, “Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.” And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? 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 18:1-8)

4) With humility

“And My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

5) With sincerity

“Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22).

6) With joy and thanksgiving

“These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival” (Psalm 42:4).

7) With confidence

“Therefore 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 4:16).

8) With thanksgiving

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6).

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).

9) With perseverance

“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” (Ephesians 6:18).

10) Earnestly

“Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant 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” (Colossians 4:12).

11) With devotion

“Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer” (Romans 12:12).

12) With one another

“Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (Romans 15:30).

G. What are some of the CONDITIONS of answered prayer?

1) Asking according to God's will

“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know

that we have the requests which we have asked from Him” (1 John 5:14-15).

2) Believing

“Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you” (Mark 11:24).

3) Praying in the Holy Spirit

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20).

4) Asking in Jesus’ name

“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13).

“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full” (John 16:24).

5) Forgiving others

“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 11:25).

6) Obeying His commands

“And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22).

7) Abiding in Him

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you (John 15:7).

8) Confessing sins

“Therefore, 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” (James 5:16).

9) Devotion to prayer

“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 1:14).

10) Piety

“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 5:7).

11) Asking

“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” (James 4:2).

12) Persistence

“Then 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; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him”; and 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.” 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. 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. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened” (Luke 11:5-10).

H. What are some of the HINDRANCES to answered prayer?

1) Doubt

“But 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. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord” (James 1:6-7).

2) Withholding forgiveness

“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 11:25).

3) Sin hinders prayer

“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” (1Peter 3:12).

“We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him” (John 9:31).

“But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).

4) Wrong motives

“You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:3).

5) Neglecting God’s counsel and reproof

“Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention. And you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof... Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me” (Proverbs 1:24, 25, 28).

6) Husbands dishonoring their wives

“You 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” (1 Peter 3:7).

7) Ignoring the poor

“He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered” (Proverbs 21:13).

8) Doubt, anger and conflict

“But 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. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord” (James 1:6-7)

“Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension” (1 Timothy 2:8).

9) Godless are without hope

“For what is the hope of the godless when he is cut off, when God requires his life? Will God hear his cry when distress comes upon him?” (Job 27:8-9)

10) God opposes the proud

“But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble’” (James 4:6).

11) Self exaltation

“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. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get’...I tell you, this man [tax collector] 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” (Luke 18:11, 12, 14).

12) Refusing to listen to the law

“He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination” (Proverbs 28:9).

13) Not reconciling with your brother

“Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering” (Matthew 5:23-24).

I. To Whom should prayer be DIRECTED (addressed)?

1) To the Father

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father” (Ephesians 3:14).

J. In WHOSE NAME should prayer be made?

- 1) Pray in Jesus' name

“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13).

K. Who should GUIDE our prayers?

- 1) Spirit guides our prayers

“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” (Ephesians 6:18).

L. What are some prayer PROMISES?

- 1) The Lord hears our prayers

“The LORD has heard my supplication, the LORD receives my prayer” (Psalm 6:9).

- 2) When we ask, He answers

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matthew 7:7-8).

- 3) God reveals great and mighty things

“Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

- 4) God can do more than we ask for

“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us” (Ephesians 3:20).

- 5) God listens

“O LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear” (Psalm 10:17).

6) Mercy and grace

“Therefore 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 4:16).

7) God rescues

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me” (Psalm 50:15)

“He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him” (Psalm 91:15).

3. “The Church is looking for better methods: God is looking for better men. What the Church needs today is not more or better machinery, not new organization or more methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use – men of prayer, men mighty in prayer! The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men – men of PRAYER.”
E.M. Bounds