



Means of God's Grace: Prayer

Prayer and the Principles of the Christian Life

Grace

Prayer is our response to God's grace and His answers to prayer are even more grace! We pray to the God Who Is, who sees and hears, who cares deeply, who loves richly, who knows best and is mighty to save, heal and deliver! God invites us to pray: *"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need"* (Heb 4:16).

Love

One of the ways we love God first is to come to him with prayers of adoration and thanksgiving. *"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* (1Th 5:16-18). One of the ways we love our neighbor as ourselves is to take the time to pray for the needs of others. *"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well"* (3Jn 1:2).

Faith

Prayer is a demonstration of true faith, because in prayer I trust in His work, not mine, in His time, not mine, in His way, not mine. Prayer runs on the two tracks of Yield and Trust because prayer exercises dependence upon God, *"Father, not my will but yours be done,"* and prayer maintains a trusting relationship with God our Father. *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Php 4:6-7).

Truth

Knowing God according to the truth affects how and why you pray. Jesus' main point in the Sermon on the Mount was to do everything in light of who God is, being your Heavenly Father and you, His dearly loved child. *"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him"* (Mt 6:7-8).

Battle

The culmination of Paul's teaching on the full armor of God was an urging to *"pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints"* (Eph 6:18). Or as Jesus simply put it: *"pray that you will not fall into temptation."*

Praying the Scriptures

We are told in God’s Word that we don’t know how to pray as we ought (Rom 8:26) and so Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding for us. Since these have also inspired the Scriptures, we can learn how to pray from the Bible and find the prayers it contains as a guide for our own.

- The **Psalms** have prayers for every situation and occasion of life.
- Paul’s prayers for the church in the **Prison Epistles** are a powerful guide for praying for your church body or an individual, as is Jesus’ prayer for the church in John 17.
- **Daniel’s, Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s** prayers, all in chapter 9 of their respective books, are heartfelt and biblically informed prayers of confession and repentance.
- **Solomon’s prayer** at the temple dedication is a wonderful guide for consecrating anything or anyone to the Lord’s service.
- The prayer of **Jabez** in 1Chronicles 4:10 inspires us to trust God for all that He wants to accomplish in us and through us.
- The **Lord’s Prayer**, given by Jesus in response to his disciples’ request that he teach them to pray (Lk 11:1-2), is his comprehensive guide to praying according to God’s will and priorities:

“This, then, is how you should pray:how not what, this prayer is meant to be a model,but definitely not for mindless repetition

Our Father in heaven, prayer must be consciously directed to God, who is our Father—he knows and he cares

hallowed be your name, “name” = identity and reputation “hallowed” = set apart so as to distinguish from the common or profane

your kingdom come, God’s rule in men’s hearts and the culmination of His salvation plan

your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. God’s will is perfectly achieved in heaven

Give us today our daily bread. “bread” here is symbolic of basic sustenance, our needs

Forgive us our debts, “debt” = what is appropriately due; what we owe God

as we also have forgiven our debtors. compared to what we owe God, any offense against us is a mere pittance; God expects consistency in our faith

And lead us not into temptation, the best way to conquer temptation is not to be there when it happens

*but deliver us from the evil one.” protection and rescue from every form of evil
(Matthew 6:9-13)*

Fasting

Fasting with prayer is an act of self-denial to express to God the earnestness of your soul for whatever you are praying for. Some reasons for fasting in Scripture include:

- Deliverance from a desperate situation (2Chronicles 20:1-17)
- Petition for protection from potential harm (Ezra 8:21-23)
- Honest and earnest confession of sin (1Kings 21:27; Nehemiah 9:1-3; Daniel 9:3; Joel 2:12-18)
- Express grief (Judges 20:26; 2Samuel 1:11)
- Courage and success in a dangerous but necessary action (Nehemiah 1:4-11; Esther 4:16)
- Accomplish God's will (Isaiah 58:6-14)
- Preparation for ministry (Matthew 4:1-2; Acts 13:1-3; 14:23)
- Insincere fasting God rejects (Isaiah 58:3-5; Jeremiah 14:12; Zechariah 7)

Nehemiah Prayers

Does so much work need to go into our prayers? Well, yes...and no. Jesus told us that we are not out to impress God with our prayers. The only thing God is impressed with is Himself. God is our Father and he knows our needs and is eager to meet them in answer to our prayers (Mt 6-7). One of my favorite prayers in the Bible is from Nehemiah 6:9

“They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, ‘Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.’ **But I prayed, ‘Now strengthen my hands.’**”

Week 7 Homework

✝ Practice your memory verse: **Ephesians 5:1-2**

✝ Read Schwarz, pp. 253-258

✝ Pick one of the prayers in the Bible and use it as a guide for your own time of prayer.

What is the Bible reference?

What themes does it mention?

What did you specifically pray for?

✝ Pick another one of the prayers in the Bible and use it as a guide for your own time of prayer.

What is the Bible reference?

What themes does it mention?

What did you specifically pray for?

✝ Throughout your day and week, petition God with “Nehemiah prayers.” What difference did you notice by doing this?