

Prayers in the New Testament - Comments and Examples

In the New Testament, prayer is a very extensive topic. Below is an assortment of comments and examples related to prayer. It does *not* cover every possible issue, but should be considered an overview of the topic.

There are three main sections: 1) information about praying, 2) comments about the words used to describe prayer, and 3) examples of prayers found in the New Testament (with an emphasis on prayer *requests*).

PART 1 - Information About Praying

This includes many of those "technical" details that people often ask about prayer, such as "how" to pray, hindrances to prayer, etc.

1. God helps us to pray

A. Jesus teaches us

- Asking the Father (see the context) - John 15:7, 16; 16:23, 26 (Note, in the context, the connection between "asking," and the two results of "fruit bearing" and "glorifying the Father." It is also necessary for us to *abide* or *remain* in Jesus.)

B. The Holy Spirit empowers us

- He gives us the desire to pray, to "call out" to God - Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6
- He helps us when we pray - Romans 8:26

2. We are commanded to pray

A. WHO should we pray for? (Praying for specific individuals or groups)

- Those who preach the good news - Romans 15:30; Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Hebrews 13:18; etc.
- Pray that God will send workers into the "harvest field" - Matthew 9:38
- All of God's people - Ephesians 6:18
- Each other (context - confession of sins and spiritual healing) - James 5:16
- Everyone, including those in authority - 1 Timothy 2:1-2
- "Brothers" (Christians) who commit a sin - 1 John 5:16

B. HOW should we pray?

- With various types of prayers - Ephesians 6:18; 1 Timothy 2:1
- In the Spirit - Ephesians 6:18
- With boldness - Luke 11:9-10
- With persistence - Luke 18:1, 7
- Always - Ephesians 6:18 and elsewhere (We are living in God's presence, *constantly* looking to him.)
- With other people - Matthew 18:19-20
- Alone - Matthew 6:6 (this verse is related to motives); Mark 1:35 (Jesus' example)

C. Posture - can vary; some examples...

- Kneeling (forehead may even be touching the ground) - Acts 21:5; Ephesians 3:14; Matthew 26:39
- Standing - Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13
- With uplifted hands - 1 Timothy 2:8

3. Prerequisites - the required character and life of those who pray

- A. Having faith/trust - Matthew 17:20; 21:22; Mark 11:24; James 1:6
- B. The need for righteousness in one's life - James 5:16
- C. Having a clear conscience (a heart that does not condemn) and obedience - 1 John 3:21-22
- D. The proper type of motives
 - RIGHT motives - asking according to God's will - 1 John 5:14-15
 - WRONG motives - asking according to one's own desires - James 4:3 and context
 - WRONG motives - praying in a way that attracts people's attention - Matthew 6:5
- E. Examples to learn from
 - "Good" examples to follow - Luke 18:7; Luke 18:13-14; James 5:17-18 (More "good" examples can be found in the verses listed below.)
 - "Bad" examples to NOT follow - Matthew 20:21; Mark 10:37; Luke 18:11-12

4. God-centered prayer

- A. In keeping with his will - 1 John 5:14
- B. Asking for what is right and good ("good gifts") - Matthew 7:11; Luke 11:13 provides the example of asking for the Holy Spirit (i.e., salvation)
- C. In faith / trust - Matthew 21:22; James 1:6-8
 - Remember who God is and don't distrust him!
- D. Awareness that we "have received" what we requested - Mark 11:24; 1 John 5:15
 - This is applicable *if* God's Word is in us. See John 15:7, a reference to our union with Jesus and the Word. This union causes *our* desires to change, until they are in agreement with *his* desires.
 - In Jesus' case, *other* people were aware that God would give him whatever he asked - John 11:22
- E. Connected with obedience - 1 John 3:22
- F. United with others in prayer - Matthew 18:19
 - Contrasted to selfish praying - James 4:3; Mark 10:35

5. Some of the many benefits of prayer

- A. You will receive... and the Father gives better than we do - Matthew 7:7+; 7:11+
 - In the next section are some examples of things that we receive.
- B. What God created is set apart as holy by the prayer of thanks - 1 Timothy 4:4-5
 - Context: Paul is opposing man-made restrictions against eating certain types of food.
- C. Examples of special things given to "those who call on him"
 - Salvation and rich blessings - Romans 10:12-13
 - Paul's letter of 1 Corinthians, and by implication, *all* Scripture - 1 Corinthians 1:1-2

6. Examples of things received through prayer (if the prayer is genuine)

- A. Justification (when the prayer is an expression of humility before God) - Luke 18:10, 14
- B. The gift of the Holy Spirit - Luke 11:13
- C. Ability to proclaim the good news about Jesus - Ephesians 6:17-20
- D. The overcoming of anxiety - Philippians 4:6
- E. Can be delivered from the evil one - Romans 15:30-31
- F. Ability to stand firm, grow spiritually, serve others, etc. - Colossians 4:12; Matthew 6:13

7. Hindrances

- A. Dissipation, evil motives, lovelessness (inconsiderate, etc.) - James 4:3; 1 Peter 3:7
- B. Unbelief, doubt - James 1:5-7
- C. An unforgiving spirit and/or unwilling to seek reconciliation with others you have offended - Matthew 5:23+; Mark 11:25

Part 2 - Some Comments about "Prayer" Words

1. Examples of how these words were used in "non-prayer" situations

Though some of the "prayer words" may specifically refer to "invoking a deity," others were just a part of everyday life. Some examples of prayer words used in everyday life include:

- *Expressing a want or desire*; used especially when addressing a superior. (The word is more like a *demand*, if the superior is asking the subordinate.)
 - *Asking because of a specific need*. (At times, it may be in behalf of others, or it may be merely an expression of politeness.)
 - *Asking about something* - such as, asking a question.
 - *"Crying out"* something from the depths of the heart (in prayer)... or an expression of anguish, etc. - it would depend on why the "cry" was made, who it was directed toward, etc.
- A. By people
- People simply asking other people questions, making requests, etc. - occurs many times; list not included here.
 - People in contact with Jesus - Mark 10:17 (asking him a question about salvation); John 12:21 (asking to see Jesus)
 - People, probably not saved (either prayer or just wishful longing) - Acts 27:29 ("praying" for daylight)
 - The rich man in Hades ("hell") - Luke 16:27 (asking that Lazarus be sent to warn his family)
 - The apostles asking ("begging") people to get reconciled to God - 2 Corinthians 5:20
- B. By demons, "crying out" something about Jesus
- Acknowledging or "crying out" something about who Jesus is (sometimes with additional comments) - Mark 3:11; 5:7; Luke 4:41; 8:28

2. Related studies that could be done

The next main section ("Part 3") will focus on *examples* of prayers - specifically the types of things *asked* (prayed) about in the New Testament. Since the topic of prayer involves more than just asking for things, there are other concepts you may also wish to explore, which are not included here. Some of these are as follows:

- A. The giving of thanks
- B. Expressions of praise to God
- C. The content of Old Testament prayers, etc.
- D. The concept of "kneeling" or "bowing down"
- Focuses on the *attitude* we should have toward a superior (or God).
- E. Worship or reverence
- This may include bowing down (or toward), or even falling down prostrate in the presence of, the superior. It's purpose is to reflect an inner attitude, symbolizing submission to the will of the superior.
 - This word may also refer to the corporate expression of prayer, adoration, hymns, etc.
- F. The concept of "approaching" or "meeting" God - being in his presence
- G. Pleading with, or appealing to, God; also, how the Holy Spirit intercedes for us (example - Romans 8:26-27)

PART 3 - Examples of Prayers Found in the New Testament

These verses focus on the type of "prayer" and "asking" that is directed toward *God*. A few examples of "prayer" words being directed toward *people* were given previously, in "Part 2."

1. A pattern - the Lord's "Model Prayer"

A. Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4

2. God and who he is

A. Delighting in who he is (*not* a "prayer request")

- His relationship to us (Father; "Our Father") - Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6
- Awareness of his knowledge and actions - Acts 1:24; 4:24
- Many verses focus on the fact that he is Lord over all (such as Acts 4:24), or simply that he is "God" (which also implies that he is over all of creation).
- We could place here any expression of love and adoration to God. Many of the praises spoken to (or about) God (such as Romans 11:33-36; Jude 1:24-25; etc.) could be put here.

B. A desire for God to be central in all things

- A desire for God and his name (i.e. - what his name signifies) to be "hallowed" - Matthew 6:9 and Luke 11:2 (The basic meaning of "hallowed" is a desire for God to be the *center of everything* - in one's own life, as well as in the entire world.)
- Many of the verses listed below reflect this desire.

3. God's plan and purpose

A. The good news and salvation

- The proclamation of the good news
 - Praying for God's help in proclaiming the good news - Acts 4:29; Ephesians 6:19+; Colossians 4:3+; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Philemon 1:6
 - Praying for the salvation of others - Acts 26:29; Romans 10:1 (See also the section about forgiveness and protection from sin, below.)
- Praying for workers who will proclaim the good news - Matthew 9:37-38

B. Rejoicing in the will of God

- Submitting to God's will - Jesus' example (at Gethsemane) - Matthew 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42
- "Your kingdom come" and "Your will be done" - Matthew 6:10 and Luke 11:2
- Praying for others to stand firm in God's will - Colossians 4:12
- Committing people to the Lord
 - One's self (at death) - Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59
 - Others - Acts 14:23

C. Other

- Jesus' requests for his apostles (and for others) - John 14:16; John 17
- Specific requests in the early church (some are *not* repeatable events) - Acts 1:24+; 4:29-30; 8:15; Romans 15:31; 1 Corinthians 14:13
- "Prayers of the future" (one example) - Revelation 6:10 (Various other passages in Revelation describe questions asked by God's people, which might be considered to be expressions of prayer.)

4. God's provisions for our daily lives

A. Implied: Accepting the will of God in whatever happens

- Submitting to his will in such matters: See Jesus' example at Gethsemane (above). Even though Jesus died (instead of being kept from death), the *absence* of "daily provisions" was temporary. His prayers *were* heard, but the provisions were delayed for the sake of something better (Hebrews 5:7-9; 12:2).

B. Provisions and health

- "Daily bread" - Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3; 1 Timothy 5:5; James 5:17-18; 3 John 1:2

C. A change in one's circumstances

- Praying for the opportunity to return to a church, when circumstances prevent the person from being there
 - Being released from prison (= persecution ended), able to return to one's friends - Philemon 1:22; Hebrews 13:19
 - Returning in order to encourage the people - Romans 1:10-12; 1 Thessalonians 3:10
- Praying for deliverance or for protection during trials and hardships - Acts 12:5; Romans 15:30; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Philippians 1:19; 2 Thessalonians 3:2 (See also Acts 4:29; Philemon 1:22; Hebrews 13:19.)
- Crying out for justice - Luke 18:7

D. "Asking" Jesus for physical deliverance - some of the miracles he did, while he was on earth

- Deliverance from drowning - Matthew 8:25; 14:30
- Deliverance from disease, etc. [Note: "Have mercy on me, Son of David" is a phrase common to many of the following passages.]
 - Lepers - Matthew 8:2; Mark 1:40; Luke 5:12
 - Blind people - Matthew 9:27; 20:30; Mark 10:47; Luke 18:38-39
 - Demon-possessed people - Matthew 15:22; 17:15; Mark 7:26; Luke 9:38
 - Those sick and going to die - Matthew 8:5-6; John 4:47
 - A dead person - Matthew 9:18 (The request was made by someone else!)

E. Instructions for those alive during the destruction of Jerusalem and/or at the end of the age

- Prayer when Jerusalem is destroyed - Matthew 24:20; Mark 13:18
- Prayer for readiness, so that you will be able to escape and to stand before the Son of Man - Luke 21:36

5. God's forgiveness, deliverance and protection from sin

A. Forgiveness

- Praying for forgiveness of one's debt to God (emphasis - our spiritual debts) - Matthew 6:12
- Praying for forgiveness of sin
 - Our own sins - Luke 11:4; 18:13; Acts 8:22+
 - Other people's sins - Acts 7:60; 1 John 5:16
 - Note: We who want forgiveness must also forgive - Matthew 6:12 (also 6:14-15); Luke 11:4; Acts 7:60 (example)

B. Deliverance

- Praying for protection from sin and sinning
 - Our own protection - Matthew 6:13; Luke 11:4; 22:46
 - Other people's protection (example) - Luke 22:31-32

C. Other

- Jesus' prayer/cry, when he was "made sin for us" (described in 2 Corinthians 5:21) - Mark 15:34

6. Prayers of Paul for the believer's spiritual growth

A. Spiritual growth and maturity

- Perfection and that you'll do nothing wrong - 2 Corinthians 13:7, 9

B. Capable of being "filled" with God

- Strengthened with power; so that Christ will dwell in your hearts - Ephesians 3:16+
- Power to comprehend Christ's love; so that you will be filled with the fullness of God - Ephesians 3:17+

C. Wisdom and understanding (in our relationship to God)

- The Spirit of wisdom/revelation; so that you will know God better - Ephesians 1:17
- Enlightened eyes of the heart; so that you will know God's hope / riches / power - Ephesians 1:18+

D. Knowledge and godly living (focusing on its effects on other people)

- That your love may abound in knowledge and insight; so that you may be able to discern what is best and be filled with the fruit of righteousness - Philippians 1:9+
- That you will be filled with the knowledge of God's will; so that you may live a life that is worthy and pleasing to God, with a fruitful life (etc.) - Colossians 1:9+

E. Glorifying Jesus by the things God enables you to do

- That God will count you worthy and fulfill the things you desire to do (things done in an expression of faith); so that you will glorify Jesus, etc. - 2 Thessalonians 1:11

F. One's faith demonstrated by the good expressed toward others ("sharing one's faith")

- Active in sharing your faith (i.e., being generous to others); the results: a better understanding of the blessings we have in Jesus - Philemon 1:6 (In this specific verse, the "sharing" does not mean "talking about it," but "living it." Other verses exist, which focus on "talking about it.")