

## NOTES

### ~ *Prayer: How-to* ~

Prayer is necessary for us to communicate our thanks, desires, needs, and requests for others to our *Father of Spirits* (God the Father). We do this by the Holy Spirit and through our Christ who intercedes with God on our behalf.

Toward that end, we're taught *how* to pray by Jesus, who gave a model – a template – for prayer (what we call the *Lord's Prayer*) (**Matthew 6:9-13**).

- What to pray (ACTS): Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication
- How to pray
  - Trust and don't be anxious (**Ephesians 3:20; Philippians 4:6**)
  - Ask with the right motives (i.e. to fulfill God's desires and plans) and keep asking (**1John 5:14; Luke 18:1-7**)
  - Be specific! The effort shows intent and helps to see God at work.
  - No rote and in private (to ensure it's from the heart and without pride) (**Matthew 6:5-8**)
- Role of the Spirit and our Christ: communicator, helper, and intercessor (**Romans 8:26-27**)
- Things that can enable or inhibit our prayers
  - **Enable – through faith and obedience:**
    - Ask with the right motives
    - Keep asking and don't lose heart
    - Living right and be obedient (**1John 3:21-22; John 15:7**)
    - Walking by the Spirit
  - **Inhibit – basically through the lack of a right heart**
    - Impure motives (**James 4:3**)
    - Bad relationships (**1Peter 3:7**)
    - Lack of repentance and reconciliation (**Psalms 66:18; Matthew 5:23-24**)
    - Disobedience (lack of the obedience shown in scriptures above)
- Journal prayers to see God at work.

**Summary:** Jesus gave us a template to pray by in our Adoration of God, Confession of anything we do in opposition to His ways, in Thanksgiving for His mercies, and in Supplication. Ask with the right motives and keep asking. Wait. Trust. Be righteous and holy to enable, and not inhibit, prayer.

~ *Prayer: How-to* ~

Give exaggeration of my old prayer

What did my prayers sound like 20 years ago? [**Give example**].

Prayer is our way to communicate with God and vice-versa through the Spirit

I wasn't obedient out of faith and had no idea of what to pray, how to pray, or of the things that would keep God from either hearing my prayers or keep Him from working in my life.

Lord's Prayer as a model

What is prayer and what's it for? Prayer is necessary for us to communicate our thanks, desires, needs, and requests to our *Father of Spirits* (God the Father). We do this by the Holy Spirit and through our Christ who intercedes on our behalf.

No vain repetition!

Toward that end, we're taught *how* to pray by Jesus, who gave a model – a template – for prayer (what we call the *Lord's Prayer*)

[**Matthew 6:9-13**].

This model isn't meant to be said on its own, as it isn't specific and could possibly be said out of vain repetition, which we're not to do according to Jesus. More on that in just a moment.

What and how should we pray?

So, just what should we pray for based on the model Jesus gave us? How should we pray? First, let's look at the 'what' – those particular things we should address at a minimum when we pray.

The ACTS acronym

**What to pray (ACTS):**

Adoration example

- **Adoration** – “Lord, there is none like you in heaven or earth. Supplier of my needs. Healer of the sick. None could create as You've done or do the things You do. Your mercies endure forever! May Your desires be *my* desires and plans. Please help me to seek you first, because there is none greater or more deserving of my heart than You!”

Confession example

- **Confession** – “I've fallen short of your expectations even though I'm to strive to be perfect as You are. My sins have included deceit in several specific instances. My actions toward others have not been charitable as you've directed them to be, but, instead, I'm selfish in my thoughts and deeds. I'm truly sorry and will work as hard as I can to repent by moving

Thanksgiving example

Supplication example

Let's look at 'how' to pray

**Trust** because God 'has' and 'does'

Ask with the right **motives** and **KEEP ASKING**

away from these things and closer to You and Your ways. Please forgive me and teach me, Lord!”

- **Thanksgiving** – “Thank you, heavenly Father, for providing for my family. We needed food and money to turn our utilities back on this week and you provided. You healed my neighbor of her flu and enabled her to return to work quicker than anyone thought possible. Thank you for our reliable vehicle and warm, comfortable home. Thank you most of all for offering the choice of life through your son, Jesus.
- **Supplication** – “Please help me to find favor with my supervisor, coworkers, and customers. Help my neighbor Judy by providing the means for them to fix the brakes on their car. My daughter, Kathy, is having difficulty focusing on her school work and is worried. Please give her peace and clarity. . . .”

### **How to pray**

- Trust and don't be anxious. This trust is the same as confidence and faith, and it comes from seeing God at work in the **past** and **present**.

[**Ephesians 3:20**]

[**Philippians 4:6**]

- Ask with the right motives (i.e. to fulfill God's desires and plans) and keep asking. If we trust God, then we understand that His timing is *His* Timing. Keep asking and trust that you'll see God's plans unfold and, if granting your petition falls within those plans, your prayers answered.

[**Give examples of Paul and delay in ministry, those awaiting the Messiah, waiting for the right job, etc.**]

[**1John 5:14**]

[**Luke 18:1-7**]

Specificity!

Get feedback on the different extremes of prayer

No **rote**

Pray in **private**

Watch out for **pride!**

Role of the Spirit and the Christ

Walk in the spirit and be obedient

- Be specific! The effort shows intent and helps to see God at work. A specific prayer reflects genuine interest in the lives of others or knowledge of God's ways and mercies.

How would God view a generic prayer of "Give us world peace and the stuff we want" over one that lists specific people and their needs, specific things we're thankful for, and specific things we need to repent of?

**[Get feedback]**

- No rote and in private. Our heart matters! A prayer of repetition may reflect a religious response without substance. A heartfelt prayer of "God – help me! I can't survive without you!" would be more likely to invoke a response from our heavenly father who truly cares for us than a repeated prayer out of a book.

Also, we need to ensure pride doesn't void out our prayer. A petition to God said quietly, privately, and from the heart will reap way more reward from God than a fancy prayer said loudly for the sake of everyone hearing how 'spiritual' the prayer may be.

**[Matthew 6:5-8]**

Role of the Spirit and our Christ: communicator, helper, and intercessor.

Without the Spirit, we have no connection with our Christ. Without the Spirit and our Christ, we have no connection to our heavenly Father, who would otherwise hear our petition and consider our needs.

So, we must walk by the Spirit and be obedient out of faith to ensure we receive and keep this wonderful gift of God's Spirit left for us by our bridegroom, Jesus.

Then, our Christ can intercede on our behalf and also reveal spiritual things to us through the Spirit.

**[Romans 8:26-27]**

What will keep God from hearing our prayers or acting?

Related to faith and obedience.

**Motives**

Keep **asking**

Live right and be **obedient**

Walk by the **Spirit**

So, will God always hear our prayers like some kind of obedient genie awaiting our every command? No! There are behaviors that will either keep God from hearing our prayers or from helping us in our moments of need. Conversely, there are things that will *help* our prayers to be more effective.

Things that can enable our prayers are related to faith and obedience. Here are a few examples.

- Ask with the right motives as we've already heard from John and Luke. Our heart – *intent* – MUST be pure!
- Keep asking and don't lose heart as we've already discussed. Remember the old woman and the judge? We certainly don't want to wear God down – just show Him we're very interested in an answer and believe it'll come in some form and in His timing.
- Living right and be obedient. We've also discussed this at some length. Our relationship with the Christ (who intercedes for us) and our God is a covenant. How can we expect Him them to honor that agreement if we don't keep our part of the vow??

[**1John 3:21-22**]

[**John 15:7**]

- Walking by the Spirit. Again, those who believe and follow will have, as a gift from God and our Christ, the Spirit. We must walk in God's ways and by this Spirit or risk going in our own, rebellious, direction. That rebellion will block our ability to pray effectively or for God to answer.

Inhibit – related to the lack of a right heart

Impure **motives**

Bad **relationships**

No **repentance**

No **reconciliation**

**Journal** prayers to see God at work

Summary

Actions that can inhibit our prayers are basically related to the lack of a right heart. Examples:

- Impure motives. Again, our heart has to be pure and praying for the right reasons – not for selfish gain or recognition!!

[**James 4:3**]

- Bad relationships. In our obedience out of faith, we're to treat others appropriately as Jesus commanded. Included in that right treatment of others is the treatment of our spouses. Disobedience in how we treat others, whether it results in a lack of caring for, or abuse of, those around us, will kill our ability to pray effectively.

[**1Peter 3:7**]

- Lack of repentance and reconciliation. Sin is rebellion against God and His ways. When we rebel and don't repent (true repentance can be defined as 'a change in behavior resulting from a change of heart), we kill our ability to pray effectively. Why should we expect God to hear or honor the prayers of an unfaithful bride as was the case with Israel and is often the case with those of us claiming to be Christians?

[**Psalms 66:18**]

[**Matthew 5:23-24**]

Finally, I'd like to discuss the concept of journaling prayers. This allows us to track what we've asked for and why, and God's responses. One benefit is an increase in faith as we see God work in our life and in the lives of others.

**Summary:** Jesus gave us a template to pray by in our **A**doration of God, **C**onfession of anything we do in opposition to His ways, in **T**hanksgiving for His mercies, and in **S**upplication. Ask with the right motives and keep asking. Wait. Trust. Be righteous and holy to enable and not inhibit prayer.

“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 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 6:9-13.

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.

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

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. —1John 5:14.

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? —Luke 18:1-8.

“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. 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. 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. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” —Matthew 6:5-8.

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.

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. —1John 3:21-22.

“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.

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

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. —1Peter 3:7.

If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear —Psalms 66:18.

“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.