

I. Introduction to Prayer

“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.” (Eph 6:18)¹

Big Idea: *If we take God seriously, we’ll be serious about prayer.²*

Prayer Definition: Prayer is expressing one’s thoughts and feelings to God.³

Prayer Specifics:

1. Prayer is an act of worship (Ps 95:6; Matt 6:9; Heb 13:15).
2. Prayer is a means of aligning with God’s will (Matt 6:10, 33).
3. Prayer is a form of thanksgiving (Phil 4:6–7; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:16–18).
4. Prayer is a practice of confession (Dan 9:4–5; Matt 6:12; Jas 5:16; 1 John 1:9).
5. Prayer is a request for help or guidance (Ps 121:1–2; Isa 41:10; Matt 7:7–8; Jas 1:5).

The Importance of Prayer⁴

1. Prayers or references to prayer are found in sixty-two of the sixty-six books of the Bible.⁵
2. The book of Psalms contains the greatest number of prayers and references to prayer.⁶
3. Jesus Christ taught more about prayer than any other biblical character (e.g., Matt 6:5–13; Luke 11:1–13). Second to Jesus is the apostle Paul (e.g., 1 Tim 2:1–4).
4. Prayer is a biblical command and expectation (Matt 6:5–6; Luke 18:1; 21:36; 1 Thess 5:17; 1 Pet 4:7).

Question: What lies cause us to think we are not fully accepted and desired before God?

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² Ronald Dunn rightly stated: “Prayer was God’s idea. He created it for people who are weakened by sin, fickle in their commitment, at times overwhelmed by doubt, often discouraged and bewildered, and nearly always fretting about life” (*Don’t Just Stand There Pray Something: The Incredible Power of Intercessory Prayer* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991], 30).

³ *The Westminster Catechism* (Question 178) defines prayer this way: “Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.”

⁴ Martyn Lloyd-Jones once wrote: “Prayer is beyond any question the highest activity of the human soul. Man is at his greatest and highest when upon his knees he comes face to face with God” (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 2 vols. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 2:45).

⁵ The four books that are silent on the subject of prayer are the Song of Solomon, Obadiah, Haggai, and 2 John. See Thomas L. Constable, *The Doctrine of Prayer* (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1969), 24.

⁶ Other books that give an unusual amount of attention to prayer are Genesis, Numbers, Judges, Matthew, Luke, Acts, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, James, and 1 Peter.

The Work of Christ

1. The basis for our right standing (i.e., righteousness) before God (Rom 3:21–22).⁷
2. The security of our standing before God (Rom 8:31–39; cf. Heb 7:25; 1 John 2:1).
3. The desire of the Father (Prov 15:8b; Heb 4:15–16; 10:19–22).⁸

Obstacles to Prayer

1. Distractions and busyness (Luke 10:40–42 = Ps 46:10).
2. Lack of Time or Prioritization (Mark 1:35 = Eph 5:15–17).
3. Unconfessed Sin (Ps 66:18; Isa 59:2 = 1 John 1:9).
4. Unbelief or Doubt (Jas 1:6–7 = Mark 11:24).
5. Pride and Self-Sufficiency (Jas 4:6 = Luke 18:13–14; Rom 12:11–12).⁹
6. Disappointment or Unanswered Prayers (2 Cor 12:8–9 = Rom 8:28).
7. Lack of Understanding or Knowledge of Prayer (Rom 8:26–27 = Matt 6:9–13).
8. Lack of Desire or Apathy (Matt 26:40–41 = Rev 3:20).
9. Spiritual Warfare (Eph 6:12 = Eph 6:18; Luke 22:40; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8).¹⁰

A Place to Start: The Jesus Prayer

Common form passed down through the centuries in the Eastern Orthodox Church:

“Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Biblical Texts:

“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” (Luke 17:13); “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” (Luke 18:13)

- Adoration: “Jesus”
- Confession: “a/the sinner”
- Thanksgiving: “mercy”
- Intercession: “me” to “us”

⁷ Timothy Keller wrote: “Jesus lost his relationship with the Father so that we could have a relationship with God as Father. Jesus was forgotten so that we could be remembered forever—from everlasting to everlasting. Jesus Christ bore all the eternal punishment that our sins deserve. That is the cost of prayer. Jesus paid the price so God could be our father” (*Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* [New York: Penguin, 2014], 80).

⁸ Paul E. Miller aptly writes: “The very things we try to get rid of—our weariness, our distractedness, our messiness—are what get us in the front door! That’s how the gospel works. That’s how prayer works . . . Bring your real self to Jesus.” (*A Praying Life* [Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2009], 25).

⁹ Of the seventy-three NT references to prayer, almost all are instructions or admonitions to pray (“And when you pray . . .”).

¹⁰ Samuel Chadwick (1860–1932), the great Wesleyan Methodist minister, wrote: “Satan laughs at our toils, mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray” (See his book, *The Path of Prayer*, 1914).

II. How to Pray Scripture

“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)

Big Idea: *Pray the Words God wants to hear.*¹¹

Why should we pray Scripture?

Praying Scripture . . .

1. Aligns us with God’s will (Ps 103:19; Isa 46:9–10; Matt 6:10; John 5:14).
2. Reveals God’s character (Exod 34:6–7; Isa 6:3; Lam 3:22–23; Matt 6:9).
3. Fosters an intimate relationship with God (Ps 145:18; Col 3:16; Jas 4:8).¹²
4. Strengthens our confidence in God’s promises (Isa 55:11; John 14:27; 2 Cor 1:20; 1 John 1:9).
5. Enables us to abide in Christ (Ps 1:2–3; John 15:7; 1 John 2:3–11).
6. Transforms our hearts and minds (Ps 1:2; John 17:17; Rom 12:2; Eph 4:23–24).¹³
7. Unifies the church’s prayers (Acts 12:1–19; Rom 11:33–36; Eph 6:10–18; 1 Tim 2:1–4).
8. Provides a tool for intercession (Ps 91:1–16; Eph 1:17–18; 3:16–19).¹⁴

¹¹ For motivation, read Kenneth Berding, *Bible Revival: Recommitting Ourselves to One Book* (Wooster: Weaver, 2013).

¹² Keller, *Prayer*, 48, states: “Prayer is continuing a conversation that God has started through His Word and His grace, which eventually becomes a full encounter with Him.”

¹³ Joni Eareckson Tada aptly says: “God’s Word is living, and so it infuses our prayers with life and vitality. God’s Word is also active, injecting energy and power into our prayer.” Quoted in Donald Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 43.

¹⁴ I recommend Kenneth & Karen Boa, *Simple Prayers: A Daybook of Conversations with God* (Atlanta: Trinity House, 2007).

How should we pray Scripture?

1. Pray for the Lord to lead you in reading and praying Scripture (Pss 25:4–5; 119:18; Luke 24:45).
2. Choose a passage to meditate upon.
 - Comfort (Ps 23:1–6; 2 Cor 1:3–4)
 - Wisdom (Prov 3:5–6; Jas 1:5)
 - Peace (Isa 26:3; Phil 4:6–7)
3. Read the selected passage out loud slowly several times.¹⁵
4. Identify a phrase or word that stands out to you.¹⁶
5. Empathize with the author’s emotions.
6. Reflect on what the passage reveals about God’s character, promises, or commands. Ask yourself, “What is God trying to show me here?”
7. Begin your prayer with praise—vertical (God) before horizontal (self and others).
 - Psalm 100:4: “Enter His gates with thanksgiving *And* His courts with praise.” → “Lord, I enter Your presence with a heart full of gratitude. Thank You for Your goodness and Your faithfulness in my life.”
 - Isaiah 40:28: “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth.” → “Lord, You are everlasting and all-powerful, Creator of all things. I worship You for Your greatness and majesty.”
8. Add your name to a specific verse.
 - Psalm 23:1: “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.” → “Lord, You are my Shepherd, and I trust You to provide everything I need. I lack nothing when I am in Your care.”
 - Philippians 4:6–7: “Be anxious for about nothing . . .” → “Lord, I bring my anxieties to You. I do not want to be anxious about [specific situation], and I trust You to give me Your peace, which transcends all understanding.”
9. Add the name of someone you know to a specific verse.
 - For healing: “Lord, I pray for [name] and ask that You would heal him/her according to Your Word in Isa 53:5: ‘And by His scourging we are healed.’”
 - For strength: “Lord, I pray for [name] that You would strengthen him/her with power through Your Spirit in his/her inner being (Eph 3:16).”
10. Return to a vertical focus and close in prayer by praising God.

¹⁵ It’s wise to ensure a proper grasp of interpreting Scripture. I recommend Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *For the Love of God’s Word: An Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015).

¹⁶ John Piper suggests: “Open the Bible, start reading it, and pause at every verse and turn it into a prayer.” Quoted in Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 33. Whitney continues: “To pray the Bible, you simply go through the passage line by line, talking to God about whatever comes to mind as you read the text. How easy that is? Anyone can do it.”

Praying the Psalms¹⁷

Why should we pray the Psalms?

1. The Psalms are God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16–17).
2. Jesus prayed the Psalms (Matt 27:46; cf. Ps 22:1).
3. The Psalms point us to Christ (Ps 110:1; cf. Matt 22:44).
4. The Psalms facilitate worship (Ps 95:6).
5. The Psalms equip us for prayer (Ps 34:17).
6. The Psalms help us to pray for others (Ps 122:6).
7. The Psalms lead us into a deeper relationship with God (Ps 145:18).
8. The Psalms strengthen our faith (Ps 23:1–4).
9. The Psalms express the full range of human emotions (Ps 42:11).
10. The Psalms teach us to live with hope (Pss 30:5; 73:16–28).

A Case Study—Psalm 42:

“For the choir director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah. As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? ³ My tears have been my food day and night, While *they* say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’ ⁴ 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. ⁵ Why are you in despair, O my soul? And *why* have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him *For* the help of His presence. ⁶ O my God, my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. ⁷ Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls; All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me. ⁸ The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night, A prayer to the God of my life. ⁹ I will say to God my rock, ‘Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?’ ¹⁰ As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, While they say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’ ¹¹ Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.”

Praying Psalm 42

God is . . .	Therefore . . .
My soul’s desire (42:1–2)	I will seek after Him
My God (42:3, 11)	I will remember in prayer God’s works
My hope and help (42:5)	I will praise Him
Full of lovingkindness (42:8)	I will sing and pray to Him
My rock (42:9)	I will look to Him
The help of my countenance (42:11)	I will look like Him

¹⁷ See Daniel Henderson, ed. *Praying the Psalms: Experiencing Scripture—Fed, Spirit-led, Worship-Based Prayer* (Denver: Strategic Renewal, 2023).

Reflection on Psalm _____

1. How would you summarize the psalm?
2. What did you learn about God and your relationship with Him from this psalm?
3. What did you learn about prayer?
4. Is there an area or a time in your life where you can relate to the psalmist's situation and feelings?
5. Pray through the psalm as though they are your own words. Express yourself to God like the psalmist.

The Lord's Prayer: A Pattern for Prayer **Matthew 6:9–13¹⁸**

Why is the Lord's Prayer¹⁹ a pattern for prayer?

The Lord's Prayer is a pattern for . . .

1. Worship = God's glory (Matt 6:9; cf. Ps 29:2; Rev 4:11).
2. Alignment = submission to God's will (Matt 6:10; cf. Rom 12:2; 1 John 5:14).
3. Dependence = daily needs (Matt 6:11; cf. Phil 4:19; Jas 1:17).
4. Forgiveness = fellowship (Matt 6:12; cf. Matt 18:21–22; 1 John 1:9).
5. Deliverance = spiritual protection (Matt 6:13; cf. 1 Cor 10:13; Eph 6:10–11).
6. Brevity = simplicity and structure (Matt 6:7–8).²⁰

The Structure of the Lord's Prayer

In these five verses, there are a total of six petitions. In 6:9–10, three petitions promote God's glory.²¹ In 6:11–13, three petitions concern our well-being.

Petition 1—God's person (6:9): “Our²² Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.”

Petition 2—God's program (6:10a): “Your kingdom come.”

Petition 3—God's purpose (6:10b): “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Petition 4—God's provision (6:11): “Give us this day our²³ daily bread.”

Petition 5—God's pardon (6:12): “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”²⁴

Petition 6—God's protection (6:13): “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”²⁵

¹⁸ Luke's version is much shorter (11:2–4), and it occurs in a different context, which shows Jesus taught His disciples to pray this pattern more than once. Interestingly, Luke doesn't record Jesus praying this prayer in the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6), parallel to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7.

¹⁹ Matthew 6:9–13 is commonly called “The Lord's Prayer.” I prefer, however, to call it “The Disciples Prayer” since it was designed for Jesus' disciples (6:9a). The “Lord's Prayer” is a better designation for John 17.

²⁰ The Disciple's Prayer takes approximately thirty seconds to pray. There are precisely seventy-four words in the Greek text of this prayer. There is not a single wasted word.

²¹ Jesus' words in 6:9–10 convincingly show that prayer is, first and foremost, about God, not about people. “Hallowed . . . come . . . done” are all aorist imperatives placed first in the Greek sentence for emphasis. The placement, the tense, and the mood all speak of urgency and emphasis. This is how believers should reverence God. The phrase “on earth as it is in heaven” refers to all three of these verbs.

²² The word “our” demonstrates that this prayer is for the gathered community, not private prayer.

²³ Jesus uses seven additional first-person plural pronouns in the second half of the prayer (6:11–13).

²⁴ In 6:14–15, there is a P.S. to the petition of forgiveness. I include it with 6:12 in the Disciple's Prayer.

²⁵ Most English versions read: “deliver us from the evil one” (NET, CSB, NRSV, NKJV, NIV, NLT) rather than simply “deliver us from evil.” Either translation is possible, but “deliver us from the evil one” is the better translation, particularly since 4:1–11 records the temptation of Jesus by Satan, the evil one.

How do we teach prayer at CBC?

*The 4/4 Pattern*²⁶

1. **Reverence:** *Who* is God?
2. **Response:** *How* should we respond?
3. **Requests:** *What* should we do about it?
4. **Readiness:** *Where* should we go from here?

Key Passage: Matt 6:9–13

1. **REVERENCE: Praise God for His character, attributes, nature, and provision (Matt 6:9).**
 - A. Father, You are holy, set apart, incomparable (6:9).
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.
2. **RESPONSE: Respond to God's character by surrendering to His will (Matt 6:10).**
 - A. Father, I surrender _____ so that I can experience Your kingdom (6:10).
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.
3. **REQUESTS: Pray God's will for resource and relationship needs (Matt 6:11–12).**
 - A. Father, please grant the daily need (6:11) of _____ for [insert name].
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.
4. **READINESS: Claim God's promises and spiritual resources for the battle (Matt 6:13).**
 - A. I claim deliverance from the evil one (6:13a) in my battle with _____ [include a sin].
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.

²⁶ Daniel Henderson, *PRAYzing: creative prayer experiences from A-to-Z* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2007), 56.

III. Developing a Personal Prayer Life

“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thess 5:16–18)

Big Idea: *Where prayer is focused, the power falls!*

What are the benefits of personal prayer?

1. Obedience to God’s Word (1 Thess 5:17)
2. Spiritual intimacy (Deut 4:7–8; Ps 145:18)
3. Spiritual growth (Rom 8:26–27; Eph 3:14–19)
4. Spiritual protection (Eph 6:10–20)
5. Strength in trials (2 Cor 12:9)
6. Clarity of purpose and vision (Acts 4:23–26)
7. Humility (Jas 4:10)
8. Hope (Rom 15:13)
9. Peace (Phil 4:6–7)
10. Guidance (Ps 25:4–5; 65:2)

How should we spend time in personal prayer?

1. Pick the best time and place to pray (Luke 5:16; 6:12–13).
2. Pray the evening prior for the ability to pray (Ps 4:8).²⁷
3. Refuse to rush, if possible (Matt 11:28–30).²⁸
4. Pray Scripture back to God (e.g., Psalms or Paul’s prayers for the churches).²⁹
5. Practice prayer outlines such as the 4/4 Pattern “ACTS”: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication or the four R’s: Reverence, Response, Requests, and Readiness.³⁰
6. Develop your own prayer calendar (see below)
7. Use prayer triggers (e.g., alarm, red lights, steering wheel, shower, shaving, working out).
8. Use sentence prayers (e.g., “Jesus, Master, have mercy on me,” Luke 17:13).
9. Do “drive-by” praying.
10. Pray for people as you text or email.

²⁷ J. Augustine Wetta profoundly states: “I am convinced, in fact, that fifty percent of holiness is simply getting to bed on time. No matter what sort of soldier you are, it’s easier to keep watch when you are well-rested” (*Humility Rules: Saint Benedict’s 12-Step Guide to Genuine Self-Esteem* [San Francisco Ignatius, 2017], 49).

²⁸ Carl Jung has famously said: “Hurry is not of the devil; it is the devil.”

²⁹ I have used all of Ken Boa’s handbooks for over thirty years. See <https://kenboa.org/product-category/handbooks/>. I also recommend D. A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992).

³⁰ For prayer outlines, go to https://www.strategicrenewal.com/resources/?fwp_types=prayer-guide.

11. Pray as you read, hear, or watch the news.
12. Take a prayer walk (1 Thess 5:17).³¹
13. Write or type out personal prayers.
14. Experiment with different prayer postures (Gen 17:3, 17; Exod 9:27–29; 1 Kgs 8:54).
15. Pray with others immediately.
16. Pray the prayers of the Puritans.³²
A Puritan Prayer³³
O God, the Eternal All, help me to know that
All things are shadows, but thou are substance,
All things are quicksand, but thou are mountain,
All things are shifting, but thou are anchor,
All things are ignorance, but thou are wisdom.
17. Read about great prayer warriors (e.g., George Muller, Susanna Wesley, David Brainerd).
18. Be an example of prayer in your family (Deut 6:6–7; Josh 24:15).
19. Seek consistent and realistic goals (Eph 5:15–17).
20. Expect answers (Heb 4:16; 1 John 5:14–15).

³¹ See Steve Hawthorne & Graham Kendrick, *Prayer Walking: Praying on Site with Insight* (Lake Mary: Charisma House, 1996).

³² Consider using Arthur Bennett ed., *Valley of Vision* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975). This book is a compilation of Puritan prayers you can pray.

³³ Bennett, *The Valley of Vision* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 2014), 147.

Today's Quiet Time Summary³⁴

Date: _____

Area of Bible study: _____

New thing(s) I learned about:

God _____

Myself _____

Others _____

I want to memorize: _____

Unanswered question(s) from today: _____

Something I would like to study in the future: _____

A special promise/truth from God to my heart: _____

Something I need to work on in my life: _____

Areas to Work On

Date: _____

Date change noted: _____

Area of need/current response: _____

Desired response: _____

Hinderance(s) and its source(s): _____

What I need to do to correct this: _____

Scripture I am claiming: _____

Prayer I have prayed concerning this: _____

³⁴ Glen Martin & Dian Ginter, *Drawing Close: A Step-by-Step Guide to Intimacy with God* (Nashville: Broadman &, Holman, 1995), 241–42.

VARIOUS PRAYER FORMATS

A.C.T.S.S

Adoration: Praising God for who He is (1 Chron 16:23–36; Rev 15:4).

Confession: Acknowledging our sins and our need for God’s forgiveness (Ps 32:5; 1 John 1:9).

Thanksgiving: Expressing gratitude to God for all He has done (Ps 136; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:16–18).

Supplication: Laying our needs and the needs of others before God (1 Sam 12:23; Eph 6:18; 1 Tim 2:1).

Surrender: Waiting on the Lord and submitting yourself to Him in obedience (Isa 40:31; Rom 12:1–2).

ALPHABET PRAYER

A—Almighty
B—Bread of Life
C—Creator
D—Deliverer
E—Eternal
F—Faithful
G—Gracious
H—Holy
I—Incomparable
J—Just
K—King of Kings
L—Lamb
M—Merciful
N—Name of above all names
O—Omniscient (all knowing)
P—Powerful
Q—Question-less
R—Redeemer
S—Savior
T—Truth
U—Unchangeable
V—Vine
W—Wise
X—(e)xcellent
Y—Yahweh
Z—Zealous

HAND OF PRAYER

- 1) The Thumb: Pray for those nearest to you (wife, children, relatives, friends).
- 2) The First Finger: Pray for those who point you to God (parents, pastors, disciplers)
- 3) The Middle Finger: Pray for those in authority (political leaders, teachers, police and firemen)
- 4) The Ring Finger: Pray for those who are weak (widows, orphans, homeless)
- 5) The Pinky: Pray for yourself.

P.R.A.Y.E.R

Praise: Honor God for who He is and what He has done (Ps 100:4).

Repent: Confess personal and corporate sins (Ps 66:18).

Ask: Include petitions and intercessions (Ps 38:9).

Yield: Submit to the direction of the Holy Spirit (Ps 143:8).

Expect: Anticipate that God will answer your prayer (Matt 7:7–8).

Rejoice: Praise God for who He is and what He will do (Phil 4:4–6).

DAILY PRAYER CALENDAR

1. Sunday: World Missions and Missionaries
2. Monday: Lost and Unchurched
3. Tuesday: United States of America
4. Wednesday: Friends
5. Thursday: Christian Leaders
6. Friday: Local Church
7. Saturday: Relatives

PRAYERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT³⁵

1. The Prayer of Abraham for a Wicked City (Gen 18:22–33)
2. The Prayer of Moses for Pardon for Israel (Num 14:13–23)
3. The Prayer of Hannah in Thanksgiving for Her Son (1 Sam 1:1–2:11)
4. The Prayer of David in Thanks to God for His Dynasty (2 Sam 7:18–29; 1 Chron 17:16–27)
5. The Prayer of Solomon for a Listening Hear (1 Kgs 3:5–15)
6. The Prayer of Solomon at the Dedication of the Temple (1 Kgs 8:22–53)
7. The Prayer of Jonah in Thanksgiving for His Rescue from Drowning (Jonah 2:2–9)
8. The Prayer of Hezekiah for Dealing with an Arrogant Enemy (2 Kgs 19:14–19; Isa 37:14–20)
9. The Prayer of Nehemiah in a Time of Distress (Neh 1:1–12)
10. The Prayer of Ezra for Confession of Corporate Sin (Ezra 9:6–15)
11. The Prayer of Daniel in Confession of National Sin (Dan 9:1–27)

PRAYER DECLARATIONS OF JESUS

1. I will be with you (Matt 28:20).
2. I will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb 13:5).
3. I am praying for you (1 John 2:1).
4. I will come back for you (John 14:3).
5. I leave you a Comforter (John 14:16).
6. Come to Me for rest (Matt 11:28–30).
7. Take heart, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).
8. You will be with Me in paradise (Luke 23:43).
9. You are My friend (John 15:15).
10. I am not ashamed to call you brother and sister (Heb 2:11).

³⁵ See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *I Will Lift My Eyes unto the Hills: Learning from the Great Prayers of the Old Testament* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2015).

PAUL'S PRAYERS³⁶

Romans

- Romans 1:8–10: Thanksgiving for the faith of the Roman believers.
- Romans 10:1: Prayer for the salvation of Israel.
- Romans 12:12: Encouragement to be persistent in prayer.
- Romans 15:5–6: Prayer for unity among believers.
- Romans 15:13: Prayer for joy and peace.
- Romans 15:30–33: Request for prayer for deliverance and acceptance in Jerusalem.

1–2 Corinthians

- 1 Corinthians 1:4–9: Thanksgiving for the grace given to the Corinthians.
- 1 Corinthians 16:23: A blessing of grace.
- 2 Corinthians 1:3–7: Thanksgiving for comfort in affliction.
- 2 Corinthians 2:14–16: Praise for God's triumph in Christ.
- 2 Corinthians 9:12–15: Thanksgiving for generosity.
- 2 Corinthians 12:7–9: Prayer regarding a thorn in the flesh.
- 2 Corinthians 13:7–9: Prayer for strength and restoration.

Galatians–Colossians

- Galatians 6:18: A prayer for grace.
- Ephesians 1:3–10: Praise for spiritual blessings.
- Ephesians 1:15–23: Prayer for wisdom and revelation.
- Ephesians 3:14–21: Prayer for strength and understanding of God's love.
- Ephesians 6:19–20: Request for boldness in proclaiming the Gospel.
- Philippians 1:3–6: Thanksgiving and confidence in God's work.
- Philippians 1:9–11: Prayer for love and discernment.
- Philippians 4:6–7: Encouragement to present requests to God.
- Philippians 4:23: Blessing of grace.
- Colossians 1:3–15: Thanksgiving and prayer for spiritual growth.
- Colossians 4:2–4: Encouragement to devote oneself to prayer.

1–2 Thessalonians

- 1 Thessalonians 1:2–3: Thanksgiving for faith, love, and hope.
- 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16: Prayer of gratitude for acceptance of the Gospel.
- 1 Thessalonians 3:9–13: Prayer for completeness in holiness.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24: Prayer for sanctification and faithfulness.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:28: Blessing of grace.
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3–5: Thanksgiving for growing faith and love.
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12; 2 Thessalonians 3: Various prayers for strength and peace.

1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

- 1 Timothy 1:12; 1 Timothy 2: Encouragement to pray for all people, including leaders.
- 2 Timothy 1: Gratitude and encouragement in faith.
- Titus 3: Blessing of grace.
- Philemon 1: Gratitude and prayer for Philemon's faith.

³⁶ For an excellent exposition of eight of Paul's prayers, see Carson, *Praying with Paul*.

IV. Overcoming the Difficulties of Prayer

“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.” (Rom 8:26)

Big Idea: *Prayer is laying hold of God’s willingness.*

Why is prayer difficult?

1. Distractions and weakness of the flesh (Mark 14:38).
2. Erroneous expectations (Rom 15:30).
3. Warped theology and understanding (Luke 11:1).
4. Sin and selfish motives (Jas 4:2–3).
5. Spiritual warfare (Eph 6:10–18).
6. Lack of discipline and prioritization (1 Pet 4:7).

What are the hindrances to prayer?

1. Unbelief (Jas 1:6–7)
2. Disobedience (Isa 59:1–4)
3. Unforgiveness (Matt 6:14–15; Mark 11:25)
4. Unconfessed sin (Ps 66:18; Isa 59:2)
5. Strained relationships (1 Pet 3:7)
6. Lack of faith (Mark 6:5–6)
7. Neglecting God’s Word (Prov 28:9)
8. Failure to ask or wrong motives (Jas 4:1–4)
9. Prayerlessness (1 Sam 12:23)
10. Indifference to the poor (Prov 21:13)

How can we overcome these prayer obstacles?

1. Recognize the privilege of prayer (Heb 4:14–16).
2. Celebrate steps of obedience (1 Thess 5:16–18).
3. Choose a prayer partner (Prov 27:17).

The Problem of Unanswered Prayer

“Do 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.” (Eccl 5:2)

“It is not that our prayers are not answered, it is that we do not accept the answer.” – Kosti Tolonen³⁷

Why doesn't God answer my prayers (see p. 17)?

1. God does answer prayer in His time (Eccl 3:11; Ps 40:1–3; Hab 2:3; Rev 21:1–22:5).³⁸
2. God makes evil into good (Gen 3:17–19; 50:19–20; Isa 45:7; Rom 8:18–19, 28).
3. God will one day provide further understanding (1 Cor 13:9–12; John 14:25–26; 16:12–13).

Does prayer change God's mind?³⁹

1. Scripture indicates God doesn't change His mind (Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29).
2. God is utterly sovereign (2 Kgs 19:25; Job 42:2; Pss 115:3; 145:13; Isa 46:9–11; Dan 4:35).
3. There is no chance or luck (Prov 16:33; Matt 10:29–30; Acts 17:26).

Why should we pray if God is sovereign?

1. God commands us to pray (1 Thess 5:17; Phil 4:6–7; Col 4:2).⁴⁰
2. God uses our prayers to fulfill His purposes (Ezek 33:13–16; 36:37–38; Romans 9–10).⁴¹
3. God loves to give good gifts to His children (Matt 7:9–11; Jas 1:17).
4. We will never understand God's ways (Job 11:7–8; Isa 55:8–9).

³⁷ Quoted in Jerry Sittser, *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer: Insights to Keep You Praying with Greater Faith and Deeper Hope* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 177.

³⁸ Sittser, *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer*, 184, comments: “Instead of unanswered prayer, perhaps there are only answers to prayer that we don't want, can't foresee, and wouldn't ask for.”

³⁹ Scriptures referring to God “repenting,” “relenting,” or “changing His mind” (e.g., Exod 32:9–14; Jonah 3:10) are anthropomorphisms—expressions that explain God in terms usually used to describe human emotions.

⁴⁰ P. T. Forsythe wrote: “Asking is a polar cooperation . . . We do not ask as beggars but as children. Petition is not mere receptivity, nor is it mere pressure; it is filial reciprocity. Love loves to be told what it knows already. Every lover knows that. It wants to be asked for what it longs to give” (*The Soul of Prayer* [Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College, 1997], 71).

⁴¹ C. S. Lewis once said: “Infinite wisdom does not need telling what is best, and infinite goodness needs no urging to do it. But neither does God need any of those things that are done by finite agents, whether living or inanimate. He could, if He chose, repair our bodies miraculously without food; or give us food without the aid of farmers, bakers and butchers; or knowledge without the aid of learned men; or convert the heathen without missionaries. Instead, He allows soils and weather and animals and muscles, minds and wills of men to cooperate in the execution of His Will” (“The Efficacy of Prayer,” in *The World's Last Night and Other Essays* [New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1960], 8–9).

How should we respond to unanswered prayer?

1. Trust in God's sovereignty (Prov 16:9; Isa 46:9–10; 55:8–9)⁴²
2. Continue to cry out with desperation (Luke 11:5–8; 18:1–8).⁴³
3. Express your emotions to God (Ps 80:4–5; even Jesus complained = 22:1, cf. 22:2, 6–7, 16–17).⁴⁴
4. Recognize Christ and others suffer with us (Heb 2:14–18; 4:14–16; 1 Cor 12:26).
5. Persevere in prayer (Luke 18:1; 1 Pet 4:7).⁴⁵
6. Cultivate patience (Rom 12:12; Jas 5:7–8).
7. Pray with open hands (Matt 6:10; 2 Cor 12:9–10).⁴⁶
8. Submit like Jesus (Luke 22:42; Heb 5:7).⁴⁷
9. Reflect and Repent (Prov 28:9; Jas 4:2–3).⁴⁸
10. Release any guilt (Ps 103:10–14; Matt 6:7–8; Luke 11:9–13; Rom 8:1, 26–27, 34).

⁴² Martin Luther wrote: “Prayer is a special exercise of faith. Faith makes the prayer acceptable because it believes that either the prayer will be answered, or that something better will be given instead . . . From this it follows that the one who prays correctly never doubts that the prayer will be answered, even if the very thing for which one prays is not given. For we are to lay our need before God in prayer but not prescribe to God a measure, manner, time, or place. We must leave that to God, for he may wish to give it to us in another, perhaps better, way than we think is best.” (“Excerpts from *Table Talk*, ‘Epistle Sermon, Fourth Sunday in Advent,’ and ‘Treatise on Good Works’” in *Devotional Classics*, ed. Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993], 133–34).

⁴³ Sittser, *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer*, 47, aptly states: “Desperation might be the true heart of prayer. But it is also a scourge and a terror. It makes us feel spiritually naked, utterly exposed . . . Desperation also makes us vulnerable to the disappointment of unanswered prayer.”

⁴⁴ Sittser, *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer*, 53–54, aptly remarks: “Half the Psalms contain complaints, usually directed toward God. The Psalmist does not hesitate to wrestle with God, cry out to God, weep before God, even blame God for misery and suffering. However high their view of God, the Hebrews believed that God was great and gracious enough to absorb this raw and reckless emotion and strong enough to withstand the hostility we pour out on him. The Psalms show us that when we approach God, we must speak the truth—about ourselves, about our circumstances, especially about our feelings. God doesn't seem to take offense. If anything, he invites such expression.”

⁴⁵ Forsythe, *The Soul of Prayer*, 16, wrote: “Prayer is never rejected so long as we do not cease to pray. The chief failure of prayer is its cessation.”

⁴⁶ The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) put it well: “The true relation in prayer is not when God hears what is prayed for, but when the person praying continues to pray until he is the one who hears, who hears what God is asking for” (Charles E. Moore, *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard* [Farmington: Plough, 1999], 345).

⁴⁷ Mother Theresa (1910–1997) rightly said: “More tears are shed over answered prayer than unanswered prayer.” Quoted in Sittser, *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer*, 197.

⁴⁸ Sittser, *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer*, 143, humbly observes: “Perhaps the reason why I don't pray more frequently and fervently is because I want the wrong things, lesser things, idols.”

The Problem of Spiritual Warfare

What are spiritual warfare essentials?

1. Christ is exalted “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion” (Eph 1:21).
2. We have been raised with Christ and seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph 2:6).
3. The Lord “delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved son” (Col 1:13)
4. Christ has disarmed the rulers and authorities (Col 2:15).
5. Satan is a defeated foe because of the cross (John 12:31).
6. Satan’s end is the lake of fire (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10).
7. We have all we need to combat Satan (Eph 6:10–18; 2 Pet 1:3).
8. Jesus’ ministry involved deliverance from demon affliction (about 25%).
9. The apostles and their followers cast out demons (Acts 5:16; 16:16–18).
10. All disciples are targets for the forces of Satan (John 10:10). But . . . the closer you get to God the more spiritual attacks you will face.

How does Satan attack believers?

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil,⁴⁹ prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world” (1 Pet 5:8–9).

1. Deceives (e.g., false teaching, lying)
2. Discourages (e.g., self-pity, unforgiveness)
3. Discredits (e.g., pride, selfishness, anger)
4. Distracts (e.g., worldly preoccupations, sexual sins, gluttony)

How can we prepare for Satan’s attack (1 Peter 5:8–9)?

1. Be sober-minded
2. Be on the alert
3. Resist⁵⁰
4. Remember

⁴⁹ The “devil” (*diabolos*) refers to “slander.” “Satan” (*Satanas*) means “adversary.”

⁵⁰ The only command given to believers for dealing with Satan is to “resist” the devil (see also Jas 4:7; Eph 6:13).

Other warfare principles

1. Recognize a war is raging (Matt 6:13; 1 Pet 2:11–12).
2. Refuse to underestimate Satan (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph 2:1–3; 1 John 5:19).⁵¹
3. Stand firm (Eph 6:11, 13, 13).
4. Submit to God (Eph 6:13; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 5:9).⁵²
5. Take every thought captive (2 Cor 10:5).
6. Appropriate your identity in Christ (Eph 1:3–14).
7. Beware of lying (John 8:44; Acts 5:3).
8. Beware of anger (Eph 4:26–27).
9. Beware of verbally attacking and slandering (Zech 3:1; Luke 4:2).
10. Refuse to blame the devil for fleshly sins; accept personal responsibility (Jas 1:13–15).
11. Refuse to blame people; recognize your real enemies (Eph 6:12).
12. Recognize Satan’s attack on the church (1 Tim 4:1–3; 2 Tim 3:1–8; Jas 3:14–16).

What are the “weapons of our warfare” (2 Cor 10:4)?

1. The word of God (1 John 2:14b)⁵³
2. The name of Jesus Christ (John 16:33; 1 John 4:4b)
3. The blood of Jesus Christ (Eph 1:7; Rev 5:9; 12:10) = Cleansing
4. The word of our testimony (Rev 12:11a) = Confession
5. A refusal to love your life (Rev 12:11b) = Courage

⁵¹ Unbelievers are: “the sons of the evil one” (Matt 13:37–39), under the dominion of Satan (Acts 26:18), blinded by “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:3–4), subject to the domain of darkness (Col 1:13), “the children of the devil” (1 John 3:8–10). C. S. Lewis put it well: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelief in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors” (“Preface to the *Screwtape Letters* [New York: Harper, 2001])

⁵² Can a Christian be demon-possessed? The Bible doesn’t actually use the term “demon possession.” A better translation of the Greek word *daimonizomai* is “to be demonized.” This allows for different degrees of demonization, such as influence, oppression, or control.

⁵³ The best defense is a good offense. With God indwelling us, we’re fully capable of doing anything God calls us to do. We have overcome, and we can continue to overcome our struggles. Ultimately, we can never be *defeated*; we can only be *deceived*.

What is the armor of God (Eph 6:14–17)?⁵⁴

1. The belt of truth (Isa 11:5): holds the tunic and sword sheath in place. Satan and his forces are deceivers, and the belt of biblical truth defends us against their lies. The more we understand the person of Christ and appropriate our position in Him, the more we will stand firm in Christ's authority against the forces of evil (1 John 2:14).
2. The breastplate of righteousness (Isa 59:17): protects the vital and vulnerable organs. We are vulnerable unless we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. The Lord wants us to be righteous not only in our position but also in our practice (1 Thess 5:8).
3. The sandals of peace (Isa 52:7): protect feet, enable one to hold ground, and move quickly. This weapon reminds us of "peace with God" (Rom 5:1) and the peace of God (Phil 4:7). This peace results in submission among believers (Eph 5:21) and spiritual authorities (Heb 13:17).
4. The shield of faith: protects from spears and flaming arrows.⁵⁵ Faith acts as a protective barrier against doubt and temptation, allowing us to trust in God's promises and power during trials.
5. The helmet of salvation (Isa 59:17): covers and protects our minds by being conscious of our new position in Christ.
6. The sword of the spirit (Isa 40:8; cf. 11:4⁵⁶): the unique armor piece that serves both defensive and offensive purposes. It equips believers to counter lies and temptations with biblical truth, just as Jesus did during His temptation in the wilderness (Matt 4:1–11).

⁵⁴ *Contra* many NT scholars and pastors, Paul doesn't primarily describe a Roman soldier's armor but that of the coming Messiah. See also Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 451–56.

⁵⁵ Paul may have a Roman soldier in mind here. See Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 846; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 456–57.

⁵⁶ "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This is Isaiah's only use of the phrase "word of [our] God."

V. Intercessory Prayer

“I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.” (Ezek 22:30)⁵⁷

Big Idea: *Our intercession may be the key to God’s intervention.*

What is intercessory prayer?

The word “intercession” comes from the Latin verb meaning “to go between” or “to intervene.” Intercession is praying for others (Heb 7:25).⁵⁸ An intercessor is a go-between who represents one party to another.⁵⁹ In intercession, believers go before God and make requests on behalf of others.⁶⁰ The late Ronald Dunn said it best: “Intercession is *position*. It is not something we do—it is something we are. It is not an exercise we engage in at a certain time of the day—it is a life that we live.”⁶¹

Who are examples of intercessory prayer?

1. Abraham (Gen 18:23–33)
2. Moses (Exod 17:10–12; Num 12:13–15; 21:7; 32:11–14; 33:16–17; Ps 106:23)
3. Samuel (1 Sam 7:5–9)
4. Nehemiah (Neh 1:4–11)
5. Daniel (Dan 9:3–19)
6. Paul (Rom 10:1; 1 Tim 2:1–2)
 - Paul says he prays for his recipients in ten of his thirteen epistles.
 - Paul indicates twice he prays night and day (1 Thess 3:10; 2 Tim 1:3).
7. Epaphras (Col 4:12–13; cf. 1:29):⁶² “He is always wrestling in prayer for you” (NIV; cf. CSB)

Jesus Christ is the best example of intercessory prayer

1. Jesus followed the usual Jewish practices of prayer (morning and evening).⁶³
2. Jesus is called an intercessor (Rom 8:34; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).
3. Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer (John 17:1–26) focused on His disciples (17 out of 26 verses).⁶⁴
4. Jesus’ prayer for Peter that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:32).

⁵⁷ French author Victor Hugo (1802–1885) said: “Those who always pray are necessary to those who never pray.”

⁵⁸ “Petition” is praying for ourselves.

⁵⁹ BDAG s.v. *entugchano* 1: “to make an earnest request through contact with the person approached.”

⁶⁰ See also Alvin Vander Griend, *Love to Pray: A 40–Day Devotional for Deepening your Prayer Life* (Terre Haute: Prayer Shop, [2003] 2008), 46.

⁶¹ Dunn, *Don’t Just Stand There Pray Something*, 85.

⁶² BDAG s.v. *agonizomai* 2.b. In Col 4:12, Paul uses the present middle participle (*agonizomenos*).

⁶³ James D. G. Dunn, “Prayer,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Leicester; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 618.

⁶⁴ The High Priestly Prayer in John 17 is Jesus’ longest recorded prayer in the NT.

Principles of intercessory prayer

1. ALWAYS start with worship-based prayer and praise (Matt 6:9).⁶⁵
2. Confess your failure to pray for other believers (Jas 5:16; cf. 4:17; 1 Sam 12:23).⁶⁶
3. Ponder the selfless nature of intercession (Phil 2:3–4).⁶⁷
4. Pray passionately (Gal 4:19) and specifically (Col 1:9–12).
5. Pray short, continual prayers (Matt 6:6–8).⁶⁸
6. Pray prayers of thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession.⁶⁹
7. Make a list (e.g., 1 Tim 2:1–2 “on behalf of all” = family, friends, coworkers, neighbors).⁷⁰
8. Practice BLESS⁷¹
 - B = Body — health, protection, energy, fitness
 - L = Labor — work, income, security, skills
 - E = Emotional — joy, peace, grief, anxiety, anger
 - S = Social — love, marriage, family, friends
 - S = Spiritual — salvation, grace, faith, hope
9. Use apps (e.g., PrayerMate, The BLESS app).
10. Read and reflect on intercessory prayers in the Bible (e.g., Neh 1:4–11; Dan 9:3–19).
11. Journal about the impact of intercession in your life and ministry.
12. Tell others you’re praying for them.

⁶⁵ Daniel Henderson aptly remarks: “Our enemy’s constant objective is to promote a creeping encroachment of negligence that will neutralize our appetite for beholding his [God’s] glory” (*Glorious Finish: Keeping Your Eye on the Prize of Eternity in a Time of Pastoral Failings* [Chicago: Moody, 2020], 67).

⁶⁶ In 1 Sam 12:23, Samuel reportedly said: “As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you.” W. Bingham Hunter provides a helpful perspective on 1 Sam 12:23: “He [Samuel] said this as one who functioned as prophet and priest in Israel. We tend to think of the priest’s work in terms of the sacrificial rituals, but intercession was an important part of priestly ministry. Since Christians are not Old Testament priests like Samuel, failure to intercede is not the same kind of sin. This verse is misused if applied directly to Christians” (*The God Who Hears* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986], 139).

⁶⁷ Dee Duke, “I believe that prayers for others carry more power than prayers for ourselves, that we need each other’s prayer more than we need to be praying for our own needs. Prayer is not an inconsequential activity; God actually changes lives because we pray. In fact, you can have greater impact in another person’s life by praying for him than through anything else you might do for him” (*The Time Is Now: Developing a Lifestyle of Prayer* [Portland: Pray Afghanistan, 2002], 56).

⁶⁸ Saint Augustine of Hippo said: “We may pray most when we say least, and we may pray least when we say most.” Quoted in Sittser, *When God Doesn’t Answer Your Prayer*, 31.

⁶⁹ Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Wheaton: Crossway: 2002), 233–37, demonstrates that the content of Jesus’ earthly prayers, as recorded in the Gospels, emphasize these three elements.

⁷⁰ Miller, *A Praying Life*, 232. Paul Miller challenges us to “Build a sample deck”: 4–10 family cards (one for each person), 1–3 people-in-suffering cards, 1 friends card, 1 non-Christian card, 1 church’s leadership card, 1 small group card, 1 missionary, ministries card, 1–3 world-or cultural-issues cards, 3 work cards, 1 co-workers card, 3 to 5 repentance cards (things I need to repent of), 3 to 5 hope or big-dream cards

⁷¹ Vander Griend, *Love to Pray*, 49.

Sample Intercessory Prayers

1. For salvation and spiritual growth (Eph 1:17–18; 1 Tim 2:4)

Prayer: “Father, I pray for [name] to come to know You more intimately. Open their eyes to Your truth and lead them into salvation. Help them to grow in their faith and live a life that honors You.”

2. For Healing and Physical Restoration (Isa 53:5; Jas 5:15)

Prayer: “Lord, I lift up [name] to You. Please bring healing to their body, mind, and spirit. Restore them to health and give them strength to overcome any illness or affliction they are facing.”

3. For Peace and Protection (Ps 91:11; Phil 4:6–7)

Prayer: “Lord, I pray for [name] to experience Your peace that surpasses all understanding. Protect them from harm and keep them safe from danger, both physically and spiritually.”

4. For Wisdom and Guidance Prov 3:5–6; Jas 1:5)

Prayer: “Father, I pray that You would grant [name] wisdom and understanding in every decision they face. Guide them in Your ways and help them to trust in Your plan for their life.”

5. For Strength and Endurance (Isa 40:29–31; Eph 6:10)

Prayer: “God, I pray for [name] to be strengthened in their inner being. Help them to endure life’s tests, trials, and tragedies, and may they rely on Your power to overcome every obstacle.”

6. For Relationships and Reconciliation (Rom 12:18; Col 3:13)

Prayer: “Lord, I pray for [name] and their relationships. Bring reconciliation where there is conflict, and help them to love others as You love them. Heal any brokenness and restore harmony.”

7. For Provision and Financial Needs (Matt 6:31–33; Phil 4:19)

Prayer: “Lord, I pray that You would provide for [name]’s every need according to Your riches in glory. May they experience Your provision in every area of their life, and may they trust in Your faithfulness.”

8. For Unity in the Church and Body of Christ (John 17:20–21; Eph 4:3)

Prayer: “Father, I pray for unity in the body of Christ. Help us to be united in our faith, love, and purpose. May Your church reflect Your love and grace to the world.”

Praying for the Lost

Should we pray for the lost?

1. Jesus' mission was to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).
2. Jesus prayed for the lost (Luke 23:34 vs. John 17:9).
3. Jesus commands disciples to pray for workers (Matt 9:37–38).
4. Paul prayed for the lost (Rom 10:1; 1 Tim 2:3–4; cf. 2 Pet 3:9).

First, pray for the found!

1. Pray that we will be filled with compassion (Matt 9:36).
2. Pray for laborers (Matt 9:35–38; 28:18–20; Acts 1:8).
3. Pray that we will be thrust out into the harvest (Matt 9:37–38).
4. Pray that we will be bold (Eph 6:18–20).
5. Pray that we will be wise and will have an open door (Col 4:2–6).

How should we pray for the lost?

1. ALWAYS begin with worship: before any prayer begins, worship and adore God for His lovingkindness, grace, and mercy, which has freely offered us the gift of salvation (Rom 5:8, 15; Eph 2:4–5, 8–9; Titus 2:11; 3:3–7).
2. Pray for salvation preparation (2 Thess 3:1–2; 1 Pet 1:2).
3. Pray for God to release the bondage of the will (Eph 2:1–2; 1 John 5:19).⁷²
4. Pray for Satan's power to be broken (Luke 11:21–22).
5. Pray that Satan will not be able to blind the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor 4:3–5).
6. Pray for the conviction of sin (John 16:7–11).
7. Pray for the realization of impending death (Heb 9:27–28).
8. Pray that God draws them to Himself (John 6:44; 12:31–32).
9. Pray that God opens hearts (Acts 16:14).
10. Pray they believe the Scriptures (Rom 10:17; 1 Thess 2:13).
11. Pray they believe in Christ (John 1:12; 5:24).

⁷² Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, translated by J. I. Packer & O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

12. Pray they submit their will to Christ's lordship (2 Cor 5:15; Phil 3:7–8).
13. Pray they take root and grow in Christ (Col 2:6–7).
14. ALWAYS conclude with thanksgiving, believing in faith that God WILL answer prayers that are prayed according to His desire (1 Tim 2:1–4; 2 Pet 3:8–9).
15. ALWAYS conclude with worship. God assures us that in the eternal state, there will be “a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’” (Rev 7:9b–10). He is worthy to be praised!!!

Nutshell Summary: we are to pray for . . .

Laborers (Matt 9:35–38; Luke 10:1–2; Eph 4:11–13)

Opportunities (Eph 5:15–16; Col 4:2–4)

Boldness (Matt 10:32–33; Acts 4:29–31; Eph 6:18–19)

Sinners (Acts 26:29; Rom 10:1; 1 Tim 2:1–4)

George Müller's Persevering Prayer

Early in his ministry, George Müller covenanted to pray for the conversion of five people daily. The first of these five people came to Christ eighteen months after he started his daily prayers. The second came five years after the first was converted. The third came six years after the second. Once, he wrote that he had been praying for the other two for thirty–six years, and they had not yet come to Christ. The fourth came shortly before Müller's death, and the fifth a few years after his death.⁷³

Praying for the Lost Quotes

“Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still.” —E. M. Bounds

“I would rather teach one man to pray than ten men to preach.” —Charles Spurgeon

“The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history.” —Andrew Murray

“We spend more time praying to keep dying saints who are prepared to die out of heaven than we pray to keep sinners out of hell. There is little passion to our praying and little confidence that it really does matter.” —Ken Hemphill

“If Christ's church is not experiencing new conversions, there is most likely one overriding reason—prayer is lacking . . . Most churches do not grow because they do not want growth enough to pray for it.”
—Ron Kincaid

⁷³ Roger Steer, *George Müller: Delighted in God* (Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1975), 267.

Prayers for an Undisciplined Believer

Question: What can I do when someone I love stops spending time in the Word or prayer? What should I do?

Answer: First, set an example in the spiritual disciplines (Acts 6:4; 1 Cor 4:16; 2 Tim 2:15). Second, recognize that things may not change overnight. It may take time. Be patient (Eccl 7:8). As Paul says, “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love” (Eph 4:1a–2). Third, bank on the power of prayer (Eph 6:18).

Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China, once said, “It is possible to move men, through God, by prayer alone.” If you believe this, begin an all-out prayer assault. I suggest you pray at least one of these passages daily for your spouse. This should further motivate you to pray for your spouse.

- 1) May _____ return to his/her first love (Rev 2:4).
- 2) May _____ never be lagging behind in diligence, but may he/she be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (Rom 12:11).
- 3) May _____ follow the LORD his/her God and fear Him; and keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him (Deut 13:4).
- 4) As _____ has received Christ Jesus the Lord, so may he/she walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in his/her faith, just as he/she was instructed, and overflowing with gratitude (Col 2:6–7).
- 5) Let the peace of Christ rule in _____ heart, to which indeed he/she was called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within him/her, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in his/her heart to God (Col 3:15–16).
- 6) May _____ rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for him/her in Christ Jesus (1 Thess 5:16–18).
- 7) Lord Jesus, would You raise up a worker/friend (Matt 9:38) to influence _____ spiritually. May this person come alongside _____ and encourage him/her.

VI. Corporate Prayer

***“And He [Jesus] began to teach and say to them, ‘Is it not written, “MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS”? But you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.”’
(Mark 11:17; cf. Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11)***

“The greatest workings of God come by corporate prayer, and we will not see the power of God in sufficient measure to transform the world around us until we pray together.” – John Franklin⁷⁴

Big Idea: *Our greatest privilege is to enjoy God’s presence together.*⁷⁵

What is the biblical basis for corporate prayer?⁷⁶

1. The first recorded corporate prayer in the Bible (Gen 4:26: people “began to call on the name of the LORD”).⁷⁷
2. Noah (Gen 9:25–27), Abraham (Gen 18:16–33), Moses (Exod 32:11–13), Joshua (Josh 7:6–9), Samuel (1 Sam 8:6–7, 21–22), and David (1 Chron 29:20) interceded between God and the people.
3. The high priest was instructed to pray a representative prayer confessing the sins of all the people on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:21). All Israelite males were to appear before Yahweh 3x yearly for holy convocations (Lev 23).
4. Israel cried out to Yahweh when they found themselves oppressed by other nations in Judges (Judg 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6–7, etc.).
5. Solomon led the nation in prayer at the dedication of the Temple (1 Kgs 8).
6. Elijah prayed publicly in his confrontation with the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:36–37).
7. King Jehoshaphat prayed, and Yahweh delivered (2 Chron 20).
8. King Hezekiah prayed with and for God’s people (2 Chron 29:28–31).
9. The “Psalms of Ascent” (120–34) were likely sung and prayed.
10. Esther (Esth 4:16), Ezra (Ezra 8:21–23; 9:1–15), Nehemiah, and Daniel (Neh 1:4–11; Dan 9:1–19) practiced fasting, confessing, and praying for God’s people.

⁷⁴ John Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken How to Lead a Powerful Prayer Meeting* (Nashville: B&H, 2005), 4.

⁷⁵ Robert L. Brandt and Zenas J. Bicket state: “For the health and growth of a local church, there is no more useful, powerful, and essential activity than a meeting set apart for the major purpose of prayer. Any church that does not concentrate its energy and attention on such gatherings hardly deserves recognition as a church; indeed, without regularly announced times of meeting for prayer, the organization is more aptly described as a social club. The work of the Kingdom is accomplished by saints who know and utilize the power of prayer ‘in one accord’” (*The Spirit Helps Us Pray: A Biblical Theology of Prayer* [Springfield: Logion, 1993], 397).

⁷⁶ For the definitive technical work on corporate prayer, see J. Gary Millar *Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, Volume 38 (Apollos; IVP, 2016). For the best practical work on corporate prayer, see Daniel Henderson, *Old Paths, New Power: Awakening Your Church through Prayer and the Ministry of the Word* (Chicago: Moody, 2016).

⁷⁷ Some consider the conversation between God and Adam and Eve after their disobedience in Gen 3:8–13 as the first corporate prayer. Adam’s response includes recognizing God’s presence, confessing fear, and acknowledging his condition. But 4:26 is still more likely.

What is the NT biblical basis for corporate prayer?

1. Jesus used plural pronouns in the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father . . . give us . . . lead us . . . deliver us . . . Matt 6:9–13).
2. Jesus prayed with and for His disciples in His High Priestly (John 17:15–21).
3. Paul stated regulations for the behavior of men and women in corporate prayer in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14.
4. Paul asked the Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians to pray for his ministry (Rom 15:30; Eph 6:19; Phil 1:19; Col 4:3–4; 1 Thess 5:25).
5. Paul argued that corporate prayer (and worship in general) should always be done in a manner that builds up the church (1 Cor 14:16–17).
6. Paul instructed leaders to facilitate prayer in the church for all people, especially kings and those in high positions, and this is to be done without anger or quarrelling (1 Tim 2:1–2, 8).
7. James commanded believers to confess sins and pray for one another (Jas 5:16).
8. In Revelation, saints in heaven corporately petition God to avenge their blood (Rev 6:9–11), the prayers of the saints are incense before the throne of God (8:1–4), and the church responds to the letter of Revelation with the corporate prayer, "Come!" (22:17).

What about Matthew 18:19–20?

Jesus declared to His disciples: "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything⁷⁸ 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." In 18:15–17, Jesus deals with the subject of church discipline, not small group prayer gatherings. The promise of 18:19 refers to executing judgment on a "brother who sins" (18:15). The two or three witnesses are those who accompany the disciple who confronts his brother (cf. 18:16).⁷⁹ Of course, we could say that a general principle is still intact in 18:19, because there are other NT passages that make similar statements:

- Matthew 21:22: "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."
- James 4:3: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."
- 1 John 5:14: "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

Yet, all of these passages have conditions placed upon them. They are not blank checks.

⁷⁸ The typical Greek word used to translate "anything" (*tis*) isn't used in 18:19. Instead, the word (*pragma*) can carry a legal connotation that ties back to the OT (Deut 17:6; 19:15) and the issue of judgment, not prayer. Cf. 1 Cor 6:1 where *pragma* is translated "case" or "dispute." In this passage, Paul discusses Christians suing one another (6:1–8).

⁷⁹ David Turner writes: "The flippant way in which 18:19 is often cited to assure small meetings of Christians that God is with them is disturbing because it twists a solemn passage into a *cliche*. No doubt God is present with any legitimate meeting of his people, whatever its size, and there is no need to mishandle Scripture to prove it. Taking this solemn passage out of context cheapens it and profanes the sacred duty of the church to maintain the harmony of its interpersonal relationships" ("The Gospel According to Matthew," *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2005), 241).

The Early Church's Commitment to Prayer⁸⁰

In the Early Church, prayer was a normal and expected part of the daily community (Acts 2:40–42). Prayer was connected with choosing leaders (1:24; 6:6–7; 13:1–3; 14:23), the gospel's spread (4:23–31), healing (9:40; 28:8), and deliverance from persecution (12:5–10; 16:25–30), to name a few.

The Book of Acts:

1:14: “with one mind were continually devoting themselves to **prayer**.”

1:24: “And they **prayed** and said, ‘You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen.’”

2:42: “they were continually devoting to **prayer**.”

4:24: “they lifted their voices to God with one accord.”

***4:31: “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”⁸¹**

6:4: “But we will devote ourselves to **prayer** and to the ministry of the word.”

6:6: “And these they brought before the apostles; and after **praying**, they laid their hands on them.”

13:3: “Then, when they had fasted and **prayed** and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

14:23: “When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having **prayed** with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

16:13: “And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a **place of prayer**; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.”

16:16: “It happened that as we were going to **the place of prayer**, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.”

16:25: “But about midnight Paul and Silas were **praying** and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”

21:5: “When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and **praying**, we said farewell to one another.”

Modern-day equivalent: The Chinese underground church

No facilities, no social media, no large programs . . . but radical growth!

⁸⁰ J. D. Greear likes to say: “The early church prayed for ten days and preached for ten minutes, and 3,000 were saved (Acts 1–2). We pray for ten minutes and preach for ten days, and few are saved.”

⁸¹ O. S. Hawkins calls Acts 4:31–32 “the most dynamic and instructive prayer gathering passage” (*The Prayer Code: 40 Scripture Prayers Every Believer Should Pray* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson 2021], 120).

What are corporate prayer “House Rules” for any setting?

1. Come with a heart focused on Christ and prepared to worship.
2. B.Y.O.B. (Bring Your Own Bible).
3. Confess any known sin.
4. Greet those you don’t recognize or are new to the gathering.
5. Sit with people, not away from people.
6. Remember the prayer ABC’s: Audible, Brief, and Clear.
7. Pray with passion (Col 4:12).
8. Encourage people who pray (Heb 10:24–25).
9. Express excitement about corporate worship and prayer (Ps 111:1; 122:1; Acts 2:42; 12:1–19).⁸²
10. Pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Isa 44:3; Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2:1–4, 17).⁸³
11. Pray for boldness (Acts 4:29, 31).
12. Pray for workers (Matt 9:38; 2 Thess 3:1).
13. Pray for hurting people (Jas 5:14, 16).

What are the concerns of corporate prayer?⁸⁴

1. The same people will participate in various prayer events/ministries.
2. Great patience will be required. (Prayer is a crock-pot, not a microwave.)
3. Additional time will be required in our already full worship gatherings and ministry lives.

⁸² Jim Cymbala put it well: “Thirty minutes of spirit-aided intercessory prayer is more effective than all the new programs and stylistic changes we are constantly tinkering with. Human ingenuity can’t be compared to God’s power” (*Storm* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014], 138–39).

⁸³ There is no spiritual neutrality. We’re either in recession or revival. Dunn, *Don’t Just Stand There Pray Something*, 227, remarks: “In the recorded history of the church, there has never been a mighty outpouring of the Spirit in revival that did not begin in the persistent, prevailing prayers of desperate people.”

⁸⁴ Al Toledo (the son-in-law of Jim Cymbala) reminds us that “the commitment of the few can secure the blessing of the many.” Quoted in Henderson, *Old Paths, New Power*, 118.

WORSHIP SERVICE PRAYER

Consider praying for CBC's worship gatherings with your community group, men's/women's group, ministry group, etc.

Before Church:

- While driving to church, pray for the safety of those who will be driving to church.
- Seeing the church sign, pray that God will allow others to "see" the sign and be convicted to come.
- Walking from the car to the front door, pray that everyone will arrive in the right frame of mind with receptive hearts.
- Entering the foyer, pray that everyone who comes will be warmly welcomed. Pray specifically for our greeters and ushers.
- Entering the auditorium, pray that God would be glorified and pleased with all of the worship that will soon take place.

During Church

- Pray for God to prepare hearts.
- Pray against distractions of any kind.
- Pray that the congregation will worship in Spirit and truth.
- Pray for the worship leaders and musicians.
- Pray for the greeters, ushers, and intercessors.
- Pray for the body to be generous in their expression of worship through giving.
- Pray that God's Word will be fearlessly proclaimed.
- Pray for the pastor to have insights into the needs of his audience.
- Pray that God will give the congregation understanding.
- Pray for people to put the sermon into practice.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will remove a spirit of apathy.
- Pray that the Lord will heal people physically, mentally, and emotionally.
- Pray that the Father will draw unbelievers to Christ.

After Church

- Pray for first-time guests to return the following Sunday.
- Pray for relationships that were developed or deepened.
- Pray for the sermon to penetrate the deep fibers of people's hearts.
- Pray for the children, youth, and adult Sunday School classes to assimilate new families that will learn God's Word and grow in relationship with God and others.
- Pray for the mid-week ministries to draw more people in.

What are corporate prayer opportunities?

- Worship service prayer (e.g., pre-service prayer gathering, post-service prayer = foot of the cross)
- Tuesday evening prayer gathering
- Community groups
- Kids & youth ministries

WORKPLACE PRAYER

These are prayers that you can pray with coworkers. It is always beautiful when corporate prayer is extended outside church walls.

1. Ask for God's blessing on your place of business (Matt 7:7–11).
2. Ask God to identify and unify the Christians in your work environment (John 17).
3. Ask God to bring salvation to your fellow employees and supervisors (Mark 3:13–14).
4. Ask God to maintain business integrity and provide wisdom for the decisions made (Prov 1:7).
5. Ask God to keep the employees safe while on the job (Ps 91:11–12).
6. Ask God to shield workers from job-related stress (John 14:1; Col 3:15).
7. Ask God to make work a joy, to center hearts on service instead of self on contentment instead of personal gain (1 Thess 4:11–12).
8. Ask God to bless employees' physical health, family stability, emotional well-being, and spiritual life (Ps 128:1–2).
9. Ask God to bless the customers served by your place of employment (Col 3:23–24).
10. Thank God for gainful employment, meaningful labor, and economic success (Gal 6:9).