

PRAYER

"Prayer is not monologue, but dialogue. God's voice in response to mine is its most essential part." – Andrew Murray

Why does God want us to pray?

All throughout the Bible, there are many commands for us to pray. It is an important part of a Christian's spiritual growth. Why? Because God is a loving, personal, all-powerful God that desires to have a relationship with his children. Prayer is our way to connect with our heavenly Father, not a chance for us to ask for the things that we want. God is not a magic vending machine that exists to serve us. He is our Father who allows us to participate in His plan through our prayers. Prayer is the means by which we confess our sins to God, worship and praise him, seek his guidance, and ask for strength in overcoming temptation.

- **Philippians 4:6–7** "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
- **Luke 18:1** "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up."
- **Colossians 4:2** "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."
- **Hebrews 4:15-16** "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."
- **Matthew 26:41** "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

How can we pray effectively?

The Bible is packed full of prayers that we can look to for guidance. The book of Psalms contains many great prayers of David in many different situations. Throughout his prayers, David always acknowledged and praised who God is, even when he questions him. We must maintain the same kind of reverence. God wants us to be open and honest with Him but we must also remember who we are praying to. For more advice on how to pray look at Jesus's life and teachings.

- Jesus prayed *with* and *for* others. We must be sure that we are not selfish in our prayers but that we are also interceding for the needs of others. (Matthew 19:13; John 17:9)
- Jesus prayed alone, in quiet. We live in a busy culture and are easily distracted. Jesus was intentional in picking a place where he would not be disturbed or distracted. (Matthew 6:6; Luke 5:16, 6:12)
- Jesus prayed often. Prayer should not be something we do before meals and bedtime but it should become an attitude that we constantly live in. (Luke 5:16)
- Jesus prayed from the heart. Prayer is not about how many fancy words you can say or how well you speak. Be genuine with what is on your heart. (John 17)
- **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
- **Romans 8:26** "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."

Why does God not answer some prayers?

In John 14:14 Jesus says, "If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." So why then if we pray for a phone, clothes, or athletic ability do we not receive it? First, we must remember that prayer is communication with our heavenly Father. It is not a time for us to ask our list of demands. God is not our personal genie that we can summon for our benefit. He does not work for our happiness. God definitely listens to our wants but he is the one ultimately in control. He is God, not Santa.

Again, Jesus' words provide the best example of this. The night Jesus was arrested he prayed in the garden in Gethsemane. Jesus fully knew that in a matter of days, he would die on the cross and the thought of that troubled him. His prayer was this, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus humbly asked the Father if there was any other way but then respectfully submits himself to God's will and authority. For if Jesus did not go to the cross, there would have been no sacrifice made for our sins.

Thus, we can assume that if a prayer is "unanswered" it could be against God's will. Another reason could be that our heart was not in the right place in what we asked for (Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 28:9; Mark 11:25; James 4:3). God is all-knowing and he most definitely knows what is best and his timing is perfect. Abraham prayed for a son and God waited to bless him with one until Abraham was old (Hebrews 6:13-15). By waiting to bless Abraham with a son, God displayed his glory and power. Perhaps sometimes when our prayers go "unanswered," God has not said no but simply not now.

Verses

Matthew 6:9-13 "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Psalm 63 You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me. Those who want to kill me will be destroyed; they will go down to the depths of the earth. They will be given over to the sword and become food for jackals. But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by God will glory in him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced.

James 5:13-15 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

Matthew 21:21-22 And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Psalm 5:3b In the morning I direct my prayer to you and watch.