

- God is holy, and we must take him seriously in our lives (v9);
- The kingdom of God is coming on earth (with Jesus as king). Notice that Jesus begins and ends his prayer desiring this kingdom (vv10,13);
- We should ask only for what we need to sustain us (our daily bread), not for self indulgent wants (v11);
- God will only forgive us our sins, as we forgive others (v12);
- God will not abandon us when we are tempted (v13);
- We can ask for deliverance from evil (v13).

#### 4. WHEN, WHERE AND HOW SHOULD I PRAY?

When? Whenever you feel you want to pray. Don't just pray when you are desperate. Make God and prayer a regular part of your thinking and daily life. You must want to pray, and intend to do so. To pray at set times of the day can be helpful. Just make sure it does not become a casual routine. Two great servants of God each prayed three times a day: David (Psalm 55:17) and Daniel (Daniel 6:10). If God is often in our thoughts, there will be many times in the day when we want to pray.

Where? Anywhere and everywhere! Standing, sitting, lying down, on our knees, walking or travelling. It is never the wrong time or place to pray, not if we are serious about our prayers.

How? We are all different, but you may find some of these ideas helpful:

- Praying out loud can help you focus better. Sometimes you will develop your thoughts more clearly.
- Pray when you are alert. It will stop your thoughts drifting.

- It can be a good idea to have a prayer list with you. A list will remind you of important issues and people for whom you want to pray.
- Praying with others, as the Apostle Paul did, can be very helpful (Acts 20:36; 21:5).

Two other comments: **praise** is an important part of prayer (Psalm 150), and **still pray when you don't feel like it!** That is when you need to pray most.

#### 5. WILL PRAYING TRULY HELP ME?

Yes, it will. It helped Jesus. He sometimes spent all night in prayer. His advice to his disciples was "watch and pray" (Matthew 26:41). We are all sinners and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). But, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9).

A strong prayer life is an important part of us being true children of God. If we are such, God will bless us with everlasting life when Jesus comes. What greater hope can you have for the future? Watch and **pray**.

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BASIC BIBLE TRUTHS

# The Importance of Prayer

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR A BETTER PRAYER LIFE

**When you have read this leaflet you will know the answers to these questions:**

1. Why should I pray?
2. What should I pray about?
3. What can I learn from the prayers of Jesus?
4. When, where and how should I pray?
5. Will praying truly help me?

#### 1. WHY SHOULD I PRAY?

Jesus said his followers "ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). Why? Because the outcome of praying, for a believer, is powerful and life-changing. The Apostle Paul said "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer ... let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). Think of that. No anxiety! Peace of mind!

How many people do you know who enjoy such blessings? Yet, by prayer, they can be yours.

God wants to help us in every aspect of our lives. He “so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). How could such a loving Father not want to hear the prayers of those who believe? Impossible! However, we “must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

One thing is certain in this life. We are dying. If we want to live forever, as God promises we can, we must confess that we need him. We cannot save ourselves. Prayer is a very important way of showing we believe this truth. All of us experience difficulties. We have many problems and we want to know the meaning of life. We need to pray for many reasons.

## 2. WHAT SHOULD I PRAY ABOUT?

Can we pray for and get everything we want? After all, Jesus said “Ask, and it will be given to you” (Matthew 7:7). John also said “whatever we ask we receive from him” (1 John 3:22).

However, good Bible students always read carefully. In Matthew 6:32-33 Jesus tells us that we must accept God as our heavenly Father. Also, we are told that we must seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. So, what we ask for in prayer must be guided by godly principles.

John agrees. He said “whatever we ask we receive from him, **because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him**” (1 John 3:22). Acceptable prayer has important pre-conditions! The first golden prayer rule must be to ask

“according to his will” (1 John 5:14). Then we shall “have the requests that we have asked of him”.

If we are willing to bend our own will to God’s will, he will hear us. Jesus, our great example in all things, made God’s will his own. He said “I seek not my own will but **the will of him who sent me**” (John 5:30).

If, in your prayers, you seek your own desires, then “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly” (James 4:3). There are right and wrong things to seek in prayer.

Having the godly principle of asking “according to his will” in your mind, you can confidently ask for:

- God’s kingdom to come on earth (Matthew 6:10)
- An earth filled with peace when Jesus comes (Zechariah 9:10)
- Eternal life for faithful believers when Jesus comes to raise the dead (John 6:40)
- The spiritual health of others (Ephesians 6:18).

God will grant these prayers because it is his plan to achieve these goals.

Is it right to pray about our human concerns when we don’t know what God’s will is on a particular matter? Yes, it is. Such prayers may be about other people or may be about ourselves. You will have experienced difficulties with at least some of these: poor health, career choices, personal relationships, unemployment, family life, issues at work, physical or mental problems.

So what should you ask for in such matters? You know what you would like, but is that the will of God? Should you accept

the offer of a better job if it means seeing less of your family? If you are single, should you pray for a husband or wife? Should you pray that your daughter does not marry the man she loves because you don’t think he is good for her? Problems, problems!

Recognise that there **may be a difference** between your own deepest desires, and **what is best for you spiritually**. You only know part of the story; God knows all of it. In the end you must trust God’s way. The second golden prayer rule must be **‘God knows best’**.

Jesus lived by that rule. He did not want to die by crucifixion. He prayed “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup (of death) pass from me; nevertheless, **not as I will, but as you will** ... My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, **your will be done**” (Matthew 26:39-42).

When we are not sure what the will of God is for us, our perfect prayer will always be, “Your will be done”. This is not easy. Humanly speaking, we want **our** longings to be satisfied, for **our** will to be done. Only by growing in the ways of God shall we be able to accept that **our will may not always be done**. God knows best.

It is good to pray about practical problems and to confess our need of God’s help. God knows our needs, but invites us to share them with him (Matthew 6:8). His answer to our prayer may be ‘yes’, or ‘no’, or ‘yes, but not yet’. Spiritually, we must be willing to accept God’s answer. Just trust him!

## 3. WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM THE PRAYERS OF JESUS?

A great deal! He gives us a wonderful pattern prayer, and tells us in Matthew 6:9-13: