

Doctrine of Praying

1. Prayer may be simply defined as a communication with God.
2. Because God is personal, all people can offer prayers.
3. However, sinners who have not trusted Jesus Christ for their salvation remain alienated from God. So while unbelievers may pray, they do not have the basis for a rewarding fellowship with God. They have not met the conditions laid down in the Bible for effectiveness in prayer.
4. Christians recognize their dependence upon their Creator. They have every reason to express gratitude for God's blessings. But they have far more reason to respond to God than this.
5. They respond to the love of God for them. God's love is revealed through the marvelous incarnation and life of Christ, His atoning provision at the Cross, His resurrection, as well as His continuing presence through the Holy Spirit.
6. Devout good works in a needy world cannot replace prayer. Important as service to others is, at times we must turn away from it to God, who is distinct from all things and over all things.
7. Neither should prayer be thought of as a mystical experience in which people lose their identity in the infinite reality. Effective prayer must be a scripturally informed response of persons saved by grace to the living God who can hear and answer on the basis of Christ's payment of the penalty which sinners deserved.
8. As such, prayer involves several important aspects.
 - Faith. The most meaningful prayer comes from a heart that places its trust in the God who has acted and spoken in the Jesus of history and the teachings of the Bible. God speaks to us through the Bible, and we in turn speak to Him in trustful, believing prayer. Assured by the Scripture that God is personal, living, active, all-knowing, all-wise, and all-powerful, we know that God can hear and help us. A confident prayer life is built on the cornerstone of Christ's work and words as shown by the prophets and apostles in the Spirit-inspired writings of the Bible.
 - Worship. In worship we recognize what is of highest worth-- not ourselves, others, or our work, but God. Only the highest divine being deserves our highest respect. Guided by Scripture, we set our values in accord with God's will and perfect standards. Before God, angels hide their faces and cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts"(Isa 6:3).
 - Confession. Awareness of God's holiness leads to consciousness of our own sinfulness. Like the prophet Isaiah, we exclaim, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). By sinning we hurt ourselves and those closest to us; but first of all, and worst of all, sin is against God (Psalm 51:4).

We must confess our sins to God to get right with Him. We need not confess them to another being. But we should confess them directly to God, who promises to forgive us of all our unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

- Adoration. God is love, and He has demonstrated His love in the gift of His Son. The greatest desire of God is that we love Him with our whole being (Matthew 22:37). Our love should be expressed, as His has been expressed, in both deeds and words. People sometimes find it difficult to say to others and to God, "I love you." But when love for God fills our lives, we will express our love in prayer to the one who is ultimately responsible for all that we are.
- Praise. The natural outgrowth of faith, worship, confession, and adoration is praise. We speak well of one whom we highly esteem and love. The one whom we respect and love above all others naturally receives our highest commendation. We praise Him for His "mighty acts... according to His excellent greatness!" (Ps. 150:2), and for His "righteous judgments" (Psalm 119:164). For God Himself, for His works, and for His words, His people give sincere praise.
- Thanksgiving. Are we unthankful because we have not received what we deserve? But if we got what we "deserved," we would be condemned because of our guilt. As sinners, we are not people of God by nature. We have no claim upon His mercy or grace. Nevertheless, He has forgiven our sins, granted us acceptance as His people, and given us His righteous standing and a new heart and life. Ingratitude marks the ungodly (Romans 1:21). Believers, in contrast, live thankfully. God has been at work on our behalf in countless ways. So in everything, even for the discipline that is unpleasant, we give thanks (Colossians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- Dedicated Action. Christ's example does not require us to withdraw from society, but to render service to the needy in a spirit of prayer. He wept over Jerusalem in compassionate prayer, and then He went into the city to give His life a ransom for many. Authentic prayer will be the source of courage and productivity, as it was for the prophets and apostles.
- Request. Prayer is not only response to God's grace as brought to us in the life and work of Jesus and the teaching of Scripture; it is also request for our needs and the needs of others. For good reasons God's holy and wise purpose does not permit Him to grant every petition just as it is asked.

9. Several hindrances to answered prayer are mentioned in the *Bible*:

- Iniquity in the heart. *Psalms 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*
- Refusal to hear God's law. *Proverbs 28:9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.*

- An estranged heart. *Isaiah 29:13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:*
- Deliberate sinful separation of self from God. *Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*
- A conscious prone to waywardness. *Jeremiah 14:10 Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. 11 Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. 12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.*
- Offering unworthy sacrifices. *Malachi 1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. 8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? Saith the LORD of hosts. 9 And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.*
- Praying to be seen of men. *Matthew 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*
- Spiritual pride in fasting and tithing. *Luke 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*
- Lack of faith. *Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*
- Doubting or double-mindedness. *James 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

10. More positively, God has promised to answer our requests

- God is pleased when the hungry are fed and the afflicted are comforted. *Isaiah 58:9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; 10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:*
- God is pleased to answer prayer when it is believed that what is asked for shall be received. *Mark 11:22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*
- God promises to hear the prayers of those who are forgiving of others. *Mark 11:25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*
- God is pleased to answer prayer which is offered in the name of Christ. *John 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*
- God will answer prayer when Christ is honored and His Words are obeyed. *John 15:7 7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*
- God hears those prayers offered in the Spirit. *Ephesians 6:8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.*
- Prayers are answered following gospel obedience. *1 John 3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*
- Prayers asked in accordance to the will of the Lord are honored. *1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* Until we have properly responded to God and His Word, He cannot entrust us with His powerful resources.

11. Prayer is request to a personal Lord who answers as He knows best. We should not think that we will always have success in obtaining the things for which we ask. In His wisdom, God hears and answers in the way that is best.
12. Effectiveness. Prayer has power over everything. God can intelligently act in any part of the universe or human history. Although some people think prayer is a waste of time, the Bible declares that "*the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much*" (James 5:16).
13. Prayer meets inner needs. One who prays will receive
- freedom from fear. *Psalms 118:5 I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place. 6 The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?*
 - Strength of soul. *Psalms 138:3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*
 - guidance and satisfaction. *Isaiah 58:9 Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; 10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: 11 And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*
 - wisdom and understanding. *Daniel 9:20 And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; 21 Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. 22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. 24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. 25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.*

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

- deliverance from harm. *Joel 2:32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.*
- Reward. *Matthew 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*
- good gifts. *Luke 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*
- fullness of joy. *John 16:23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. 24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*
- Peace. *Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*
- freedom from anxiety. *1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

14. Is prayer effective only in the inner lives of those who pray? No, prayer can make a difference in the lives of others.

15. Biblical writers believed prayer for others could result in

- greater wisdom and power. *Ephesians 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.*

- inward strength, knowledge of Christ's love, and a filling with God's fullness. *Ephesians 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.*
- discernment, approval of what is excellent, filling with the fruits of righteousness. *Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*
- knowledge of God's will, spiritual understanding, a life pleasing to God, fruitfulness, endurance, patience, joy. *Colossians 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; 12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:*
- a quiet, peaceable life. *1 Timothy 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*
- love for one another and all people, holiness before God. *1 Thessalonians 3:10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith? 11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. 12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: 13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*
- comfort and establishment in every good word and work. *2 Thessalonians 2:16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, 17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.*
- love for God, steadfastness in Christ. *2 Thessalonians 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*

- the sharing of one's faith, promotion of the knowledge of all that is good. *Philemon 6 That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.*
 - equipment for every good work that is pleasing to God. *Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*
16. Some people who think prayer can affect others question the ability of God to change His usual patterns in the physical world. But some prayers in the Bible changed nature and physical bodies.
17. Jabez prayed for enlarged borders and protection from harm.
- *1 Chronicles 4:10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.*
18. Other people in the Bible prayed for various things.
- deliverance from trouble. *Psalms 34:15 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. 16 The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17 The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. 18 The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. 20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. 21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. 22 The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.*
 - deliverance from both poverty and riches. *Proverbs 30:7 Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: 8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: 9 Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*
 - deliverance from the belly of a great fish. *Jonah 2:7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. 8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. 9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord. 10 And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.*

- daily bread. *Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.*
 - preservation and sanctification of spirit, soul, and body, the healing of the sick, and the ending of the rain and its beginning again.
 - ❖ *1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - ❖ *James 5:14 Is any sick among you? 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: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*
 - ❖ *James 5:17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*
17. When the disciples prayed, the building around them shook and an earthquake opened the doors of their prison. Our prayers do make a difference in how God acts in the world!
- *Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.*
 - *Acts 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. 26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.*