

PRAYER



Ours and the Lord's.

WHAT IS PRAYER? Many definitions have been offered. Let us look into the Word of our gracious God and see what we can discover about this great privilege He has granted us - the privilege of prayer!

The Elements of Prayer

1. Read Psalm 19:14. *What are two features of our prayers?*

_____ and _____

Prayer is a way of talking to God, with the heart moving the mouth to speak out its concerns and needs and praise.

2. Look up Psalm 10:17. According to this passage, only one of the two elements listed above is absolutely necessary for prayer - *which is it?*

3. *What does Jesus invite us to do in Matthew 7:7? What does He promise?*

4. *What does Jesus invite us to do in Psalm 50:15? What does He promise?*

5. God wants us to know when we *may* - and when we may *not* - expect our prayers to be answered. Look up Matthew 4:10-11. *To whom ALONE is all our worship and prayer to be directed?*

ICON KEY	
	Introduction
	Important point
	For further reading

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6. Look up John 16:23. *In WHOSE NAME are we to pray if we want God to give us what we ask?*

7. Read I John 5:14. There are certain prayers which the Lord ALWAYS grants! *Which are those?*

8. In Luke 22:42, we overhear Jesus praying to His heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. *What does Jesus say at the end of His prayer (which is good for us to say also)?*

9. John 2:1-11 is the account of a wedding which Jesus attended in the town of Cana. When the wine ran out at the reception, His mother Mary asked Jesus to provide more. His answer in verse four was not "no." *What was Jesus' answer?*

10. Read Matthew 18:19. The prayers of two or more people praying together can be very effective. *WHAT CONDITION, however, needs to exist between them?*

The Wrong Kind of Prayers

11. Some people (particularly Roman Catholics) pray to "saints," which is their word for certain outstanding Christians who have died. The Bible simply uses the word "saints" for all those who believe in Jesus as their Savior. Regardless, *what did Matthew 4:10 (above) tell us about whom we may worship and pray to?*

12. Can dead people look down on us and see what we're doing? Read Isaiah 63:16. The prophet Isaiah lived hundreds of years after the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob ("Israel"). *What does the prophet say about those dead "saints"?*

13. Some religions urge you to offer prayers for the souls of those who have died. But read Hebrews 9:27. *What's the problem with such prayers?*

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14. Read Matthew 6:7. *What is another kind of praying that Jesus warns against?*

15. Some people confess a "foxhole" faith. That is, when they find themselves in desperate trouble, they pray a prayer like this: "O Lord, if you really do exist, please get me out of this jam!" Does God hear such a prayer? Look up James 1:6-7. *Here the Apostle warns us against WHAT kind of praying?*

16. Romans 16:17 tells us a lot about the doctrine of church fellowship. *So what does this passage have to do with prayer?*

The Right kind of Prayers

17. Read I Timothy 2:8. *Where does God wish people to pray?*

18. Look up and read Matthew 6:5-6. In contrast to the way the Jewish religious leaders prayed, *how does God tell us to pray?*

19. Refer to Psalm 26:12. *Where else is it particularly appropriate for Christians to pray?*

20. How *often* should a person pray? Once a day? Two or three times? *What does I Thessalonians 5:17 say?*

As we have seen, our God has invited and instructed us concerning the great privilege and power of His children's prayers. On one rather informal occasion when Jesus' disciples saw that He had just finished praying, they asked Him to teach them also. Jesus answered by giving them what we now call "The Lord's Prayer" (Luke 11:2-4). On another occasion (Matthew 6:9-13) Jesus was preaching on the same mountain where He fed five thousand people. This time He added the final words - or "doxology" - of the prayer. This is the form of our Savior's prayer which we use in our own worship.

In order to better understand the Lord's Prayer, we may study it in nine sections: the introduction, the seven "petitions" (things we ask for), and the conclusion. By comparing the

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various parts of this prayer with passages from the Bible, we can gain a rich understanding of what this prayer means for our life.

The Introduction

"Our Father, who art in heaven"

21. Read James 1:17. *What is one reason we call God "our Father"?*

22. Human beings are by nature God's enemies, not His children. Look up Romans 8:15-16 and answer: *How did we get to be God's children?*

23. According to Galatians 3:26, *what is it that qualifies us to be God's children?*

24. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Especially from verse 16, *what should our ATTITUDE be when we come before God in prayer?*

The First Petition

"Hallowed be Thy name"

When the Bible uses the term "name of God," it means more than just proper nouns like "Redeemer," "Jehovah," "Messiah," etc. **The name of God is everything He has revealed to us about Himself.** In a very real sense, *the Bible* is God's name, because the Bible is where God reveals Himself to us. To hallow the name of God, therefore, means to keep His name Holy, especially by correctly using His Word.

Obviously, God's name is holy all by itself. Nothing we do could ever change that. In this petition we ask that God would lead us to hallow His name by teaching his Word in its truth and purity, and by living according to that Word.

25. Read Jeremiah 23:28. *What is one way in which we keep God's name holy?*

26. Some Christians "talk the talk," but don't "walk the walk." That means that their behavior doesn't match their words. Look up Luke 11:27-28. According to Jesus, *we hallow God's name not only by HEARING the Word, but also...*

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27. Read Matthew 7:15. *What is one way in which God's name is DISHONORED?*

The Second Petition

"Thy kingdom come"

28. Some people think the "kingdom of God" is a physical place. Is it? Read Luke 17:20-21. *What did Jesus say about the kingdom of God?*

29. Is God's kingdom something physical or material? Read Romans 14:17. *What did the Apostle Paul say on the subject?*

"God's kingdom" is His gracious rule in the hearts of believers. In this petition of the Lord's prayer, we are asking that this kingdom would come also to us.

30. Read Luke 24:46-47. *God's kingdom comes when WHAT happens?*

31. *Answer the above question again from Romans 10:17:*

The Third Petition

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

32. Look up I Timothy 2:4. *What is God's gracious will for all people?*

33. Many times Christians must undergo suffering in this world - sometimes more than those who are not Christians! But read Romans 8:28. No matter what happens, *what promise do we have about how God's will for our lives?*

34. Many enemies oppose God's will, including the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh. Read Ephesians 6:10-17. *What is one way in which God wants us to pursue His will?*

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35. Many people nowadays say that the devil is not a real, personal being. But God's Word describes him as very real indeed. *What does I Peter 5:8 tell us about this enemy of God's will?*

36. Refer to I John 2:15-16. The sinful world in which we live also opposes God's will in our lives. *What is God's advice about our attitude toward the world?*

37. Read Acts 9:1-22. There was never a more bitter enemy of Christians than the man called Saul. But God had other plans for him. *What was God's will in the case of Saul?*

38. Many devout Christians are fearful of *losing* their faith. But God's will covers this, as well. Compare Luke 22:32. *What is Jesus' prayer for all His disciples (you and me included)?*

The Fourth Petition

"Give us this day our daily bread"

God supplies all His creatures with food, even those people who do not acknowledge Him. In this petition, though, we ask God to keep us thankful for all the blessings He gives us. It's important to note that of all the seven petitions in the Lord's prayer, this is the only one which mentions *material* blessings - it gives you an idea how much more important are the *spiritual* blessings which fall from His hand!

39. Can we rely upon God to give us the necessities of life? Read Psalm 37:25. King David saw a lot of things in his life, *but what did he NEVER see?*

40. Look up Psalm 145:15-16. *TO WHOM does God give daily bread?*

41. If you have any doubts about God's willingness to provide you with all you need, you need only read Romans 8:32. Here the Apostle Paul asks a question that needs no answer. *What is the point of this passage?*

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42. Read the parable of the foolish rich man, Luke 12:15-21. *What is far more important than riches?*

43. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus sums up the proper relationship of *spiritual* wealth to *material* wealth. *What is Christ's instruction to believers?*

The Fifth Petition

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"

Other sinners have the same need which *we* have - the need for forgiveness! In this petition we ask that God would pardon our own iniquities for Jesus' sake, and that out of gratitude to our Savior we too would be led to forgive the people who sin against us.

44. Read Psalm 143:2. We certainly do not ask God to pardon us for the sake of anything *we* have done. If the Lord judged people according to their deeds, *what percentage of them would be saved?*

45. Read the parable in Luke 18:10-14. *Which of the two men in the parable found forgiveness?*

WHY?

46. Some people wear their self-righteousness like a coat. But according to Isaiah 61:10, *what is the only garment which makes us acceptable in God's sight, and where do we get it?*

47. In another parable, Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus teaches us about forgiveness - both God's and ours. In your own words, *what is the point of this parable?*

The Sixth Petition

"And lead us not into temptation"

In this petition we ask God to consider our great weakness, and not allow us to come under temptation. Sometimes the Lord chooses to test our faith; in that case, we ask for the strength to overcome. In *all* cases, we ask God to keep us from exposing ourselves unnecessarily to sinful situations.

48. Read the account of David and Bathsheba, II Samuel 11:1-12:13. *When did David's temptation begin? Whose fault do you think it was?*

In your life, you will find that one sin nearly always leads to another. *Which sin did David commit first, and which further sin did this lead to?*

How did the story end (chap. 12:13), and how does this ending apply to your own life?

49. Look up James 1:13-15. God does many things for us, *but what does He never do?*

50. Read Ephesians 6:13, 16-17. *Name some of the tools our Lord gives us to fight against temptation:*

51. Read Genesis 22:1-18. Here Abraham's faith was tested by God. *What did Abraham show by his actions?*

The Seventh Petition

"But deliver us from evil"

Here we ask that God would not let us be overcome by evil, but that He would make us victorious, and bring us finally to heaven.

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52. Some people think the Christian life is all smooth sailing. But read Acts 14:22. *Why do we believers especially need God's deliverance from evil?*

53. Look up and read II Corinthians 4:7-18. Verse 7 says, *We have this treasure in earthen vessels. What do you think is meant by "this treasure," and "earthen vessels"?*

After describing the suffering we endure in this life, Paul draws a comparison in verse 17. *All our earthly suffering is "light" compared to WHAT?*

54. Read Hebrews 12:1-11. Especially from verse 2, *from whose example may we take heart in the midst of earthly suffering?*

55. Look up Revelation 21:4. *Describe the FINAL deliverance which John outlines in this passage:*

The Conclusion

"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever, Amen."

We can be sure that our prayer will be heard and answered. After all, it is God Himself who commands us to pray and promises to answer us, for Jesus' sake. "Amen" is a word of confidence meaning, "yes, it *shall* be so!"



Additional Bible Readings

Consult Psalms 23, 32, 51, 100, 103, 121, 130.