

What the Bible Says About Prayer

Four Kinds of Prayer

There are many types of prayer. Below are several main categories of prayer. A person may pray one or all of these in a single prayer time, and in any order. You can remember these categories with the acronym ACTS.

Adoration

Prayer, first and foremost, ought to be about worship. God alone is worthy of undiluted praise. That would be true even if God never gave us a thing, and that is why adoration is distinct from thanksgiving. Notice that the Lord's Prayer begins with "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matt. 6:9). Holding up God's name for praise is our prime duty in prayer. Examples: 1 Chron. 29:10; 2 Chron. 6:26–27; Luke 2:37.

Confession

"Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us" (Luke 11:4). Knowing that human sin blocks communication with God, Jesus taught his disciples to pray this way to make sure that there are no stumbling blocks between God and them. Examples: 2 Chron. 7:14; Dan. 9:4–19; 1 John 1:8–9.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is praise for something God has done for us or given to us—or for what we trust him to do. The apostle Paul thanked God for the believers in Philippi: "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Phil. 1:3–5). Examples: Ps. 100:4; 107:1; 118:21; Matt. 14:19; Eph. 1:15–16; 1 Thess. 1:2; 5:16–18; 1 Tim. 4:4.

Supplication (Also called Petition)

Our heavenly Father wants his children to bring their requests to him (Phil. 4:6). Jesus taught, "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (Matt. 7:11). Intercession is a type of supplication where we pray for the needs and concerns of others. And we should not just pray for our friends, but also "...pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). Examples: Gen. 24:12–15; 1 Sam. 7:8.

How to Pray

PRAY ALWAYS. We should live in a constant attitude of prayer. John MacArthur, a Christian author and pastor, explains that praying continually means "you live your life and your experiences of life with a constant, close connection to the Lord and are drawn into his presence through everything." (Also see Ps. 1; Josh. 1:8.)

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.—1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

PRAY ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL. In all requests, we should keep the perspective that it is always "if the Lord wills." He is still in charge and knows best.

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.... Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."—James 4:13–15

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.—1 John 5:14–15

PRAY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. Every time you pray, come with an open heart allowing God's Spirit in you to guide your prayers. Where we are inadequate, the Spirit knows exactly the right thing to say. (Also see Rom. 8:15–16; Eph. 5:18.)

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.—Ephesians 6:18

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.—Jude 20–21

We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.—Romans 8:26–27

ASK IN FAITH—AND ALSO FOR FAITH. Faith may move mountains, but having that faith is often easier said than done. The Gospel of Mark tells a story of a father who wanted to fully believe that Jesus would answer his request to heal his son. The father cried out to Jesus, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" Even though this father had difficulty with faith, Jesus healed his son (Mark 9:14–29). Like this father, we too can pray for stronger faith.





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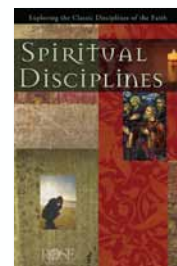
Have you ever experienced the discouragement of an unanswered prayer? Have you found yourself questioning God, wondering “Why didn’t He answer my prayer?” and “Why is he silent now when I need him the most?” Sometimes prayer seems like a one-sided event, even though we know God is listening.

How do you respond to God’s silence? Do you try to “figure” God out—the purpose behind it all—asking “Was it because I sinned?” “Is a better opportunity coming?” or “Have I lost God’s favor?” This pamphlet gives more than 50 Bible teachings about prayer and gives helpful tips for having a better prayer life.

Now you can deepen your understanding of prayer with *What the Bible Says About Prayer*. This pamphlet will help you experience the peace that comes from diving into a deeper communication with God. *What the Bible Says About Prayer* is a resource you will refer to often as you seek to improve your prayer life and God’s will in your life.

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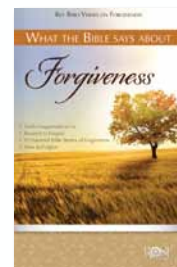


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