



# *Questions About Prayer*

*A GotQuestions.org Bible Study*







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# ***How to Use This Bible Study***

*Welcome to the Got Questions Bible Study! We're so glad you're here!*

In these studies you will find GotQuestions content, Bible search questions to dig deeper, and heartfelt questions to spark reflection and discussion. Whether you are a new or seasoned believer, using these Bible studies for personal study or as a small group/Sunday School resource, we hope you will increase in your understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ and that you will seek Him more passionately.

*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*  
– Jeremiah 29:13

These Bible studies are tools to help you grow in your knowledge of the topics at hand. However, knowing about God is not the same as actually knowing Him. God invites each of us to know Him personally and to have eternal life through Him.

Throughout this study, there will be information to read and questions to answer. Next to the questions will be icons. Here is your key to understanding them:



Content Qs



Engage Qs



Bible Look Up Qs



Reflection Qs

If we place our faith in Him, trusting in His death on the cross to pay for our sins, we will be forgiven and receive the promise of eternal life in heaven.

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*  
– John 3:16

If you have not yet trusted in Him for salvation or are unsure if you are saved, please visit: [www.gotquestions.org/eternal-life.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/eternal-life.html).

May God richly bless you as you seek to study His Word and grow in your walk with Him (Joshua 1:8)!





# Lesson 1: What is prayer?

*The most basic definition of prayer is “talking to God.” Prayer is not meditation or passive reflection; it is directly communicating with God. It is the communication of the human soul with the Lord who created the soul. Prayer is the primary way for the believer in Jesus Christ to communicate his emotions and desires with God and to fellowship with God.*



***Prayer is how we talk to God. It is essential for our relationship with Him just as talking with a friend is essential for the growth of that friendship. List out ways that communication is essential for the growth of a relationship.***



***How is communication essential for our relationship with God?***



***How would you describe your prayer life? How comfortable are you with communicating with God? Are you in any way hindered from communicating with and having fellowship with God?***



***What areas of your prayer life would you like to grow in?***

Prayer can be audible or silent, private or public, formal or informal. All prayer must be offered in faith (James 1:6), in the name of the Lord Jesus (John 16:23), and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26). As the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia puts it, “Christian prayer in its full New Testament meaning is prayer addressed to God

as Father, in the name of Christ as Mediator, and through the enabling grace of the indwelling Spirit” (“Prayer” by J. C. Lambert). The wicked have no desire to pray (Psalm 10:4), but the children of God have a natural desire to pray (Luke 11:1).



***In salvation, Jesus reconciles us to the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Trinity is seen in salvation, so prayer reflects the Trinity. How is the Trinity seen in prayer?***



***What do we learn about the heart of humanity that the wicked do not desire to pray but that the children of God have a natural desire to pray?***

Prayer is described in the Bible as seeking God's favor (Exodus 32:11), pouring out one's soul to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:15), crying out to heaven (2 Chronicles 32:20), drawing near to God (Psalm 73:28, KJV), and kneeling before the Father (Ephesians 3:14).

Paul wrote, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). Worry about nothing; pray about everything.



***How are you following the biblical principle in Philippians 4:6-7? In what areas of your life would you worry less if you prayed about everything?***

Everything? Yes, God wants us to talk with Him about everything. How often should we pray? The biblical answer is “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17, ESV). We should keep a running conversation going with God all day long. Some find the [ACTS formula](#) of prayer or the Lord’s prayer helpful, but there really is no special formula for how to pray in the Bible. We should just do it. We can pray under any and all circumstances. Prayer develops our relationship with God and demonstrates our trust and utter dependence upon Him.



***What are some helpful habits you intentionally have regarding your prayer life that help build your relationship with God throughout the day?***

Prayer is the Christian's way of communicating with God. We pray to praise God and thank Him and tell Him how much we love Him. We pray to enjoy His presence and tell Him what is going on in our lives. We pray to make requests and seek guidance and ask for wisdom. God loves this exchange with His children, just as we love the exchange we have with our children. Fellowship with God is the heart of prayer. Too often we lose sight of how simple prayer is really supposed to be.

When we make petitions to God, we let God know exactly where we stand and what we would like to see happen. In our prayers, we must admit that God is greater than we are and ultimately knows what is best in any given situation (Romans 11:33–36). God is good and asks us to trust Him. In prayer, we say, essentially, “Not my will, but your will be done” (Luke 22:42). The key to answered prayer is praying according to the will of God and in accordance with His Word. Prayer is not seeking our own will but seeking to align ourselves with the will of God more fully (1 John 5:14–15; James 4:3).



***Look up the following verses. What do they reveal about some of the purposes of prayer?***

***2 Chronicles 7:14:***

***2 Chronicles 20:12:***

***Psalms 18:6:***

***Philippians 4:6-7:***

***1 Timothy 2:1-2:***

***Hebrews 4:16:***

***James 5:16:***

***1 John 1:9:***

***1 John 5:14:***



The Bible contains many examples of prayer and plenty of exhortations to pray (see Luke 18:1; Romans 12:12; and Ephesians 6:18). God's house is to be a house of prayer (Mark 11:17), and God's people are to be people of prayer:

“Dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love” (Jude 1:20–21).



***Prayer is essential for our relationship with God. If you have not yet trusted in Christ for salvation and don't have a relationship with God, today is the day! We encourage you to read and respond to this article that explains our relationship with God. The Lord loves you and wants you to respond to Him: <https://www.gotquestions.org/relationship-with-Jesus.html>***

***If you have trusted in Christ and have a relationship with God, spend some time in prayer. Psalm 145:18 reads, “The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.” Call on Him. Pour out your heart to Him. Share your emotions and desires honestly. Come to Him, ready to seek His will. The Lord loves you and wants to hear from you.***



## Lesson 2:

# What is the purpose of prayer?

*Prayer is an important part of the Christian life. It is the way we communicate with the Lord and praise Him.*



***What would you say is the purpose of your prayer life? What do you pray for the most?***

To understand the purpose of prayer, it is important to first understand what prayer is not. There are many wrong views in the world and culture about prayer, even among Christians, and these should be addressed first. Prayer is not:

- bargaining with God.
- making demands of God.
- only asking God for things.
- a therapeutic, meditation-type exercise.
- bothering God and taking up His time.
- a way to control the Lord.
- a way to show off one's spirituality before others.
- a substitute for taking personal responsibility.
- a one-sided conversation without listening to God.



***When have you held one of these views of prayer? If you have, how did having this view of prayer impact your view of God?***

Many people believe that prayer is only about asking God for things. Although supplication is a part of prayer (Philippians 4:6), it is not the sole purpose of prayer. Praying for the needs of ourselves and others is needed and beneficial, but there is so much more to prayer. A. W. Tozer warned, “Prayer among evangelical Christians is always in danger of

degenerating into a glorified ‘gold rush’” (Mornings with Tozer: Daily Devotional Readings, compiled by Gerald Smith, Moody Publishers, 2008, entry for Feb. 26). But God is not a magical genie who answers our every wish, nor is He a weak God who can be controlled by our prayers.



***Since God is not a magical genie, what benefits are there to bringing our needs before the Lord? (see Psalm 118:5, Philippians 4:6-7, and 1 Peter 5:7)***

The best way to learn about the purpose of prayer is studying the example of Jesus during His earthly ministry. Jesus prayed for Himself and for others, and He prayed to commune with the Father. John 17 is a great place to see Jesus' use of prayer. He not only prays that the Father be glorified but also prays for His disciples and "for those who will believe in me through their message" (John 17:20). Submitting to the Father's will was another aspect to Jesus' prayer life, highlighted in His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39). With any request we have, we must submit to God's will.

In addition to interceding for others, prayer is also a way to strengthen our relationship with God. Jesus set the example, as He prayed to the Father throughout His earthly ministry (Luke 6:12; Matthew 14:23). Those in relationships will naturally seek to communicate with each other, and prayer is our communication with God. Other good examples in the Bible of those who spent time in prayer are David, Hezekiah, and Paul.



***Read John 17. What did Jesus pray for and what does it reveal about His relationship with God and with humanity?***

Ultimately, the main purpose of prayer is worship. When we pray to the Lord, recognizing Him for who He is and what He has done, it is an act of worship. There are many examples of prayer being an act of worship in the Bible, including 2 Kings 19:15, 1 Chronicles 17:20,

Psalms 86:12–13, John 12:28, and Romans 11:33–36. How we pray should reflect this purpose; our focus should be on who God is, not on ourselves.





***True worship is the acknowledgment of God and all His power and glory in everything we do. In what ways is prayer an act of worship?***

Interestingly, the model of prayer that Jesus gave the disciples in Matthew 6:9–13, known as the Lord’s Prayer, has all these elements. The first part includes praise and worship of God (Matthew 6:9), and then the second part moves on to praying for God’s will to be done (Matthew 6:10). After this, there is supplication for ourselves and others (Matthew 6:11–12), as well as asking for strength to deal with temptation (Matthew 6:13). Jesus modeled this prayer for His disciples, and it shows all the reasons for prayer with the central focus of worship.

***From [www.gotquestions.org/why-pray.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/why-pray.html)***

***Prayers un-prayed will be prayers unanswered. If the Syrian woman with the demon-influenced daughter had not prayed to Christ, her daughter would not have been made whole (Mark 7:26–30). If the blind man outside Jericho had not called out to Christ, he would have remained blind (Luke 18:35–43). God has said that we often go without because we do not ask (James 4:2). In one sense, prayer is like sharing the gospel with people. We do not know who will respond to the message of the gospel until we share it. In the same way, we will never see the results of answered prayer unless we pray.***

***A lack of prayer demonstrates a lack of faith and a lack of trust in God’s Word. We pray to demonstrate our faith in God, that He will do as He has promised in His Word and bless our lives abundantly more than we could ask or hope for (Ephesians 3:20). Prayer is our primary means of seeing God work in others’ lives. Because it is our means of “plugging into” God’s power, it is our means of defeating Satan and his army that we are powerless to overcome by ourselves. Therefore, may God find us often before His throne, for we have a high priest in heaven who can identify with all that we go through (Hebrews 4:15-16). We have His promise that the fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much (James 5:16-18). May God glorify His name in our lives as we believe in Him enough to come to Him often in prayer.***



***“Prayers un-prayed will be prayers unanswered.” How does this statement impact you or encourage you to pray differently?***

Author Warren Wiersbe sums up the purpose of prayer well: “The immediate purpose of prayer is the accomplishing of God’s will on earth; the ultimate purpose of prayer is the eternal glory of God” (from

On Earth as It Is in Heaven: How the Lord’s Prayer Teaches Us to Pray More Effectively, Baker Books, 2010, p. 78).



***Write out your current prayer requests. Prayer is time spent growing your relationship with the Lord, seeking His will, coming to Him with your requests, and worshiping Him for who He is. Is there anything else you need to pray for? Write it down! Spend some time praying and worshiping the Lord through prayer.***



## Lesson 3: Does God hear my prayers?

*God hears everything, including prayers. He is God. Nothing gets by Him (Psalm 139:1-4). He is sovereign over everything He created (Isaiah 46:9-11). So the question is not whether God is aware of every prayer (He is), but how God intends to answer them.*



***What are some reasons people question whether or not God hears our prayers?***

God wants us to pray. He has created prayer as a means by which we can enjoy Him (Psalm 16:11; Revelation 3:20), confess our sin (1 John 1:9), ask Him to meet our needs (Psalm 50:15), and align our wills with His (Jeremiah 29:11-12; Luke 22:42). One

kind of prayer is guaranteed to be granted. Luke 18:13-14 describes the prayer of repentance. When we call upon the Lord in humble repentance, He is eager to justify and forgive us.





***Read the following verses. What do they reveal about our relationship with God as we cry out to Him in repentance?***

***Psalm 19:11-14:***

***Psalm 34:***

***Psalm 66:17-20:***



***What comfort or encouragement do you receive knowing that God answers your prayers, and that when you pray in humility, according to His will, He hears you? We never have to question whether or not He heard our humble cries for His forgiveness, mercy, and love.***

However, when considering prayer, it is important to remember that most promises of God in Scripture were written to His people. In the Old Testament, those promises were for Israel and all who united with them. In the New Testament, those promises were written to the followers of Jesus. It is a misuse of Scripture to pull out isolated verses and try to apply them to any situation we want, including prayer. Even though the Lord knows and hears all, He has given some circumstances in which He will not listen to our prayers:

1. When we are choosing to hold on to sin, rather than repent and change, God will not hear our prayers. In Isaiah 1:15, the Lord says, “When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood!” Proverbs 28:9 says, “If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction, even their prayers are detestable.”

**Example:** A couple is living together in sexual sin, yet they pray for God’s blessing on their home.



***When has sin in your life affected your relationship with God?***

2. When we ask according to our own selfish desires, God will not hear our prayers. James 4:3 says, “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

**Example:** A man is dissatisfied with his three-year-old Toyota, so he prays for a brand-new Mercedes.



***Looking at your list of prayers from the previous lesson and any new prayer requests you have, are any of your prayers prayed from selfish desires? If they are, what would it look like to surrender them to God’s will?***

3. When what we ask is not in accordance with His will for us. First John 5:14 says, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”

**Example:** We pray fervently for a new job, but God’s plan requires that we stay where we are and be a witness to our coworkers.



***What do the following verses reveal about God’s will for us?***

***Proverbs 3:5-6:***

***Micah 6:8:***

***Matthew 6:33:***

***Luke 22:42:***

***Romans 12:2:***

***1 Timothy 2:3-4:***

***1 Thessalonians 5:18:***

***1 Peter 2:15:***

***2 Peter 3:9:***

4. When we do not ask in faith. In Mark 11:24 Jesus said, “I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” However, faith is not believing for something; it is believing in Someone. Our faith is in the character of God and His desire to bless and comfort us. When we pray, we should have faith that He hears us and will grant every request that is in line with His will for us

(1 John 5:14–15).

**Example:** We ask God to supply a financial need but continue to worry and make faithless comments to our families and coworkers, such as “I’m probably going to go to the poorhouse. I’ll never get that money.”



***Philippians 4:6-7 tells us: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” What in your life is consumed by worry, and how can you pray about it with faith and trust in God?***

God is holy and desires us to be holy as He is (Leviticus 22:32; 1 Peter 1:16). When He knows that we are seeking that holiness as well, He is delighted to answer our prayers in ways that continue our spiritual growth. Jesus said, “If you remain in me and my words remain

in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7). The key to prayer is abiding in Christ so that whatever we ask is in accordance with His heart (Psalm 37:4).



***As you spend some time in prayer after this lesson, ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of any sin (John 16:8) that could be impacting your prayers. Then spend some time surrendering your will to His and asking for God’s will to be done. And lastly, thank God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do. As Ephesians 3:20-21 reminds us: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”***





## Lesson 4:

# Does prayer change God's mind?

*This question can be best answered by breaking it into two questions: 1) Does prayer change God's mind? and 2) Does prayer change things? The answer to the first is, no, God does not change His mind. The answer to the second is, yes, prayer changes things. So how can prayer change circumstances without changing God's mind?*



***How would you answer the question above? What Bible passages come to mind in answering this question?***

First of all, in order for God to change His mind, He would have to improve upon Himself in some way. In other words, if God changed His mind, that action would suggest that His first way of thinking was deficient, but, because we prayed, He improved His plan concerning our situation. We change our minds when we see a better way to do something. We

thought A but realized B was better, so we change our mind. But, since God knows all things, the beginning from the end (Revelation 22:13; Ephesians 1:4), it is not possible for Him to improve upon any plan that He has made. His plans are already perfect (2 Samuel 22:31), and He has stated that His plans will prevail (Isaiah 46:9–11).



***What do we learn about God’s character from these verses, and how do they impact your view of prayer?***

***Isaiah 46:9-10:***

***Malachi 3:6:***

***Hebrews 13:8:***

***James 1:17:***

What about passages like Exodus 32:14 that seem to imply that God “repented of” His action? The Hebrew word *nacham*, often translated “repent” or “change one’s mind,” can also mean “sorrow” or “to bring comfort.” Genesis 6:6 is the first occurrence of this word in reference to the Lord: “The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.” This appears to mean that God had second thoughts about His decision to create human beings. But, since God’s ways are perfect, we need to look for an alternate understanding. If we apply the secondary definitions of the word translated “regretted,” we can understand this verse to mean that the wickedness of man brought great sorrow to God’s heart, especially in light of what He must do to restore them.

Jonah 3:10 is another example of the Hebrew word *nacham*: “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.” In other words, God took comfort in the fact that He did not have to destroy the Ninevites as He had said He would. He did not change His mind; He already knew they would repent. His actions are always a part of His bigger plan that was formed before He created the world. Jeremiah 18:8 helps explain this concept: “And if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.” God is not changing His mind; He is taking comfort in the truth that man’s repentance will curb the consequences that He, in His righteousness, has already established.



***What does God’s response to sin or repentance in the above examples reveal about His character and relationship to our prayers?***

So if prayer does not change God's mind, why do we pray? Does prayer change our circumstances? Yes. God delights in changing our circumstances in response to our prayers of faith. Jesus instructed us to "always pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1, ESV). First John 5:14–15 also reminds us that, when we pray according to God's will, He hears and answers. The key phrase is "according to His will." That will also includes His timing.

We can think of it this way: a father plans to give his daughter a car when she turns 16. He knows by that time she will have a job, be active in church and school

activities, and be able to pay for her own insurance. But he also plans to wait to give it until she asks for it, because he wants her to value such a gift. But at age 11, she begins to beg for a car. She pleads, bargains, and gets angry when on her 12th, 13th, and 14th birthdays there is still no car. She matures a bit and stops asking, but then at 16 she approaches her father in a more thoughtful way, explains her need for a car, and expresses her confidence that her dad will take care of this need. In a very short time, he joyfully hands her the keys. Did he change his mind? No, he had always planned to give it to her. Did she need to ask? Yes, that was part of his decision.



***When has God answered your prayer or prayers in a way that revealed His perfect will and timing? What changed in your relationship with God as a result?***

In a similar way, our heavenly Father invites us to ask Him for everything we need. He delights to give it to us when it is within His plan. He knows we don't always understand His timing, but He expects us to trust and not doubt (James 1:5–6; Matthew 6:8). Our prayers

help to align our hearts with His heart until His will is our highest goal (Luke 22:42). He promises to listen and grant the desires of our hearts when our hearts are wholly His (Psalm 37:4; 2 Chronicles 16:9).



***As you pray today, in what areas of your life do you need to trust in God's unchanging character and sovereignty? Thank Him that no matter the request, His will and timing are perfect. Praise Him that He knows all things and that He is always good and thereby can be trusted with our prayers. In what areas of your life do you need to align your will with God's? Praise Him that every good gift comes from Him, that He hears and is intimately involved with our prayers, and that He delights to give us what is for our good and His glory!***



## Lesson 5:

# Does God answer prayers?

*The short answer to this question is, “Yes!” God has promised that, when we ask for things that are in accordance with His will for our lives, He will give us what we ask for (1 John 5:14–15). However, there is one caveat to add to this: we may not always like the answer.*



***When have you sought an answer—whether of God or of someone else—and not liked the answer? What was the cause of the disappointment or frustration that the answer produced?***

We pray for a lot of things—some good, some bad, some really pointless. But God listens to all of our prayers, regardless of what we ask (Matthew 7:7). He does not ignore His children (Luke 18:1–8). When we talk to Him, He has promised to listen and respond (Matthew 6:6; Romans 8:26–27). His answer may be some variation of “yes” or “no” or “wait, not now.”

Keep in mind that prayer is not our way of getting God to do what we want. Our prayers should be focused on things that honor and glorify God and reflect what the Bible clearly reveals God’s will to be (Luke 11:2). If we pray for something that dishonors God or is not His will for us, He is unlikely to give what we ask for. God’s wisdom far exceeds our own, and we must trust that His answers to our prayers are the best possible solutions.





***Why can we trust that God answers according to His will with the best possible solutions?***

**Does God answer prayers? – When God says “yes.”**

In the first two chapters of 1 Samuel, Hannah prays and asks God for a child. She had been unable to conceive which, in biblical times, was considered a mark of shame for a woman. Hannah prayed fervently—so fervently that a priest who saw her praying thought she was drunk. But God heard Hannah, and He allowed her to give birth to a child.

Jesus said, “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13, ESV). Nothing happens without God allowing it to happen (Romans 8:28).



***Looking back at a recent time when God answered your prayer request with a “yes,” how did it encourage you?***



### **Does God answer prayers? – When God says “no.”**

In John 11, Mary and Martha wanted Jesus to heal their dying brother, yet Jesus allowed Lazarus to die. Why did He say “no” to these grieving women who loved Him so much? Because He had greater things planned for Lazarus, things that no one could possibly have imagined.

“No” is one of the hardest answers we can receive. But, once again, it is important to remember that God is all-

knowing and is aware of the entire timeline of history. He knows every possible outcome of every possible choice in every possible situation; we do not. He sees the “big picture”; we see a partial brushstroke. Proverbs 3:5 says to “trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding” (ESV). When we get a “no” answer, we must trust that whatever we asked for was not God’s will.



***What is difficult about receiving a “no” answer, and how does trusting in God’s sovereignty and goodness help you respond to a “no” answer?***

### **Does God answer prayers? – When God says “wait, not now.”**

Sometimes hearing “wait” is even harder than hearing “no” because it means we have to be patient (Romans 8:25). While waiting is difficult, we can be thankful God is in control and trust that His timing will be perfect (Romans 12:12; Psalm 37:7–9).

God wants the best for your life. He does not want you to suffer needlessly. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (ESV). Be patient and know that He is your loving Father (Psalm 46:10).



***What can we do when we are in a season where God’s response is “wait, not now” to trust and continue living faithfully and fervently for the Lord?***

Abide by Philippians 4:6 as you make your requests to God: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to

God” (ESV). Then, when God responds, be prepared to accept His wisdom—whether or not you agree with His answer.



***Psalm 33:20-22 reads:***

***We wait in hope for the LORD;***

***he is our help and our shield.***

***In him our hearts rejoice,***

***for we trust in his holy name.***

***May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,***

***even as we put our hope in you.***

***While you wait for God to answer your prayer requests, how are you trusting in Him as you wait? How are you faithfully and fervently seeking and living for the Lord as you wait for Him?***



## Lesson 6:

# How should a Christian respond to unanswered prayer?

*How many Christians have prayed for someone, only to see their prayers go seemingly unanswered? How many have prayed and perhaps have “given up” because they have become discouraged at how long it has taken to have their prayer answered? God hears our prayers and will respond, but He will do so in His timing which is for our good and His glory. How we deal with unanswered prayer is not just for our own benefit but for the benefit of others as well.*



***How do you handle unanswered prayer? What about unanswered prayer is personally difficult for you?***

When we pray, we are engaging in the most precious and God-given act of communication with the One to whom we are accountable for all we do. We have been truly bought at a steep price—the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ—and therefore we belong to God.

Our privilege of prayer is from God, and it is as much ours now as when it was given to Israel (Deuteronomy

4:7). Yet, when we pray or speak to the One in heaven, there are times when He seems not to answer. God answers every prayer with a “yes,” a “no,” or a “wait.” In every case, though, Scripture suggests that our prayers are being dealt with. The Lord Jesus is tender and loving; He loves our communing with God the Father, for He, Himself, is our representative (Hebrews 4:15).



**Read the following verses. What do they reveal about God's character?**

***Psalm 33:4-15:***

***Psalm 86:15:***

***Isaiah 30:18:***

***Lamentations 3:22-23:***

***1 John 3:1:***



***What are some positive reasons why God does not answer prayer the way we want Him to?***

Often, but not always, prayer is unanswered because of unconfessed sin. God cannot be mocked or deceived, and He who sits enthroned above knows us intimately, down to our every thought (Psalm 139:1-4). If we are not walking in the Spirit or we harbor enmity in our hearts toward our brother or we ask for things with

the wrong motives (such as from selfish desires), our prayers are negatively impacted (2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 66:18; James 4:3). Sin hinders our ability to be in fellowship with God, and it hinders our prayers. Unbelief (Proverbs 15:8) and hypocrisy (Mark 12:40) also negatively impact our prayers.



## ***How should we view sin, knowing that it hinders our prayers?***

Another reason why prayers seem to go unanswered is that the Lord is drawing out of our faith a deeper reliance and trust in Him, which should bring out of us a deeper sense of gratitude, love and humility. In turn, this causes us to benefit spiritually, for He gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; Proverbs 3:34). Oh, how one feels for that poor Canaanite woman, who cried out incessantly to our Lord for mercy when He

was visiting the region of Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 15:21-28)! She was hardly the person a Jewish rabbi would pay attention to. She was not a Jew and she was a woman, two reasons that Jews ignored her. The Lord doesn't seem to answer her petitions, but He knew all about her situation. He may not have answered her stated needs immediately, but still He heard and granted her request.



***What about God's character allows you to trust in the timing and answer of your prayer requests?***

God may seem silent to us, but He never sends us away empty-handed. Even if prayers have not been answered, we must rely upon God to do so in His own time. Even the exercise of prayer is a blessing to us; it is because of our faith that we are stirred to persist in prayer. It is faith that pleases God (Hebrews 11:6), and if our prayer life is wanting, does that not reflect our spiritual standing also? God hears our impoverished cries for mercy, and His

silence inflames us with a sense of persistence in prayer. He loves us for us to come to Him. He loves for us to reason with Him, sharing with Him what we do not understand. Let us hunger for the things that are after God's heart and let us walk in His ways and not our own. If we are faithful to pray without ceasing, then we are living in the will of God, and that can never be wrong (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).



***Are there any areas of your life where God appears to be silent?***



***Psalm 139:23-24 reads:***

***Search me, God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.***

***Spend some time like the psalmist asking God to reveal any areas of your life where sin might be hindering your prayers. After you have done this, cry out to the Lord in the areas where He has not yet answered. Share your heart and purpose to stand fast, waiting on the Lord for His response. May you not grow weary in crying out to Him for He hears you.***





## **Lesson 7:**

# **How can I know what to pray for?**

*From the Old Testament to the New, God commands people to pray. When we're facing a crisis, we have no trouble knowing what to pray for (see 2 Chronicles 7:13–14). We ask the Lord for help, deliverance, provision, or healing. At other times, we know we should pray, but we're not sure what to pray about.*



***When you do not know what to talk to someone about, what do you do to help keep that relationship and conversation going?***



***Have you ever experienced a time where you did not know what to pray about?***

Various prayer structures have been suggested, and they can be helpful: the five-finger prayer, the ACTS acronym, etc. Jesus gave us a model prayer in Matthew 6:9–13, and, if we follow it, we have no shortage of prayer topics:

“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.”



***Let’s do a little exercise as we go through these sections. How is God holy and for what is God to be glorified? Write out as many things as you can think of.***

We can design our own prayers around this model prayer. It is a template over which we can lay our own requests. So let’s look at each section of Jesus’ model and see how we can apply it to our own prayer lives.

1. “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” It is to God alone we pray, and a primary thing we pray for is that we would “hallow” God’s name. That is, we pray that we would make God’s name and reputation holy, that we would sanctify it. God is holy and worthy of all honor, and our first priority is to pray that the world would see how holy and glorious He is.

2. “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Before we start down our list of needs, we must remind ourselves that it is God’s will we desire, not our own (Matthew 26:39, 42). The primary goal of prayer is to align our will with God’s. We must

be sure our hearts are in right relationship with Him; otherwise, our prayers are little more than to-do lists we expect God to fulfill. So we pray that God’s will would prevail in our hearts and lives, regardless of what else we ask for.



***Write out a statement that aligns your heart, desires, and requests with God's will.***

3. "Give us today our daily bread." We are invited to ask for what we need. In Matthew 7:7-8, Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." One of the things we pray for is our daily necessities.

We usually spend the most time on this part of prayer because these concerns are what drive us to pray. Whatever is troubling our hearts, whatever fears, needs, or anxieties are plaguing us, we are told to cast them on the Lord (1 Peter 5:7). Job trouble, family squabbles, rebellious children, financial strain, or the search for meaning are all part of "give us today our daily bread." Whatever is pressing on our hearts can be laid at the feet of Jesus and left there.



***Write out a list of requests: whatever is pressing on your heart and whatever needs you have.***

4. “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Another thing we pray for is personal forgiveness. This is where prayer can become painful. If our hearts are sincere before God, He will reveal those areas where we are clinging to sin or living in unforgiveness. We are invited to confess our sins and

expect a full pardon (1 John 1:9). But then God requires us to pay it forward. We must be ready to forgive those who have sinned against us (see Matthew 18:21–35). As we ask forgiveness for our own transgressions, we must ready our hearts to forgive those who’ve hurt us.



***List out anything you need to confess or ask for forgiveness.***

5. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” God does not lead people into temptation (see James 1:13–14). Rather, Jesus is teaching that we acknowledge the presence of an evil tempter, and we ask God for protection from his devices. Every temptation we face is experienced by others, and God will provide “the way of escape” so that the temptation

is not too great to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13, NASB). Admitting our tendency to fall into temptation, we call upon the Lord to protect us. We pray for the power to intentionally seek “the way of escape,” whether it be changing the channel, changing a relationship, or changing our minds.



***Admit the areas in your life where you are struggling to live for the Lord. Write out the temptations you currently face. Be honest.***

6. [“For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”] Some translations bracket this last phrase as not original to the text, but it is still helpful in guiding our prayers. After we have presented our requests to God (Philippians 4:6), it is good to remember who God is. Worship is an important part of prayer, but we often jump straight to the requests and

then the “Amen” without pausing to recount God’s greatness. By concluding with a summation of all God is due, we are saying, “Lord, You alone are worthy of all worship and praise. It is Your will, not mine, that must prevail, and I will work in harmony with You. You alone deserve my adoration and my obedience, and I freely give it.”



***For what specifically can you thank and worship God? Write out as many things as you can think of.***

As helpful as this model is to us, we are not limited to it. Prayer is conversation with God. We should pray all day, about everything (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The more we learn Scripture, the more we can pray it back to God when it fits the situation. The Psalms are filled

with prayer-worthy verses that often seem tailor-made for our circumstances. When we don’t know what to pray, we can turn to the Psalms and read them back to their Author (try it with Psalms 6, 23, 27, 73, and 131).



***In this lesson, you have applied the Lord’s prayer and created content for prayer for yourself. Spend time praying through the various sections, going from praising God for who He is, seeking His will, bringing your needs before Him, confessing sin and asking for forgiveness, acknowledging your areas of temptation and asking Him to strengthen you to live for Him, and ending in worship.***





## ***Lesson 8:***

# **How can I be sure I am praying according to the will of God?**

*Man's highest aim should be to bring glory to God (1 Corinthians 10:31), and this includes praying according to His will.*



***What does it look like to pray according to God's will versus our own?***

First, we must ask for wisdom. “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (James 1:5). In asking for wisdom, we must also trust that God is gracious and willing to answer our prayers:

“But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt” (James 1:6; see also Mark 11:24). So, praying according to the will of God includes asking for wisdom (to know the will of God) and asking in faith (to trust the will of God).





## ***What do these verses reveal about God and wisdom?***

***Psalm 111:10:***

***Proverbs 2:6:***

***Romans 11:33:***

***James 1:5:***

***James 3:17:***

Here are seven biblical instructions that will guide the believer in praying according to God's will:

1) Pray for the things for which the Bible commands prayer. We are told to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44); for God to send missionaries (Luke 10:2); that we do not enter temptation (Matthew 26:41); for ministers of the Word (Colossians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:1); for government authorities (1 Timothy 2:1-3); for relief from affliction (James 5:13); and for the healing of fellow believers (James 5:16). Where God commands prayer, we can pray with confidence that we are praying according to His will.

2) Follow the example of godly characters in Scripture. Paul prayed for the salvation of Israel (Romans 10:1). David prayed for mercy and forgiveness when he sinned (Psalm 51:1-2). The early church prayed for boldness to witness (Acts 4:29). These prayers were according to the will of God, and similar prayers today can be as well. As with Paul and the early church, we should always be praying for the salvation of others. For ourselves, we should pray as David prayed, always aware of our sin and bringing it before God before it hinders our relationship with Him and thwarts our prayers.



***Looking at these first two ways to pray according to God's will, whose example do you want to follow? Or which specific area that we are commanded to pray for do you want to add to your prayers?***

3) Pray with the right motivation. Selfish motives will not be blessed by God. “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:3). We should also pray, not so our lofty words can be heard and we may be seen by others as “spiritual,” but mostly in private and in secret, so that our heavenly Father will hear in private and reward us openly (Matthew 6:5-6).

4) Pray with a spirit of forgiveness toward others (Mark 11:25). A spirit of bitterness, anger, revenge, or hatred toward others will prevent our hearts from praying in total submission to God. Just as we are told not to give offerings to God while there is conflict between ourselves and another Christian (Matthew 5:23-24), in the same way God does not want the offering of our prayers until we have reconciled with our brothers and sisters in Christ.



***In what ways have your attitudes and motives impacted what you pray for and how you pray?***

5) Pray with thanksgiving (Colossians 4:2; Philippians 4:6-7). We can always find something to be thankful for, no matter how burdened we are by our wants or needs. The greatest sufferer that lives in this world of redeeming love, and who has the offer of heaven before him, has reason to be grateful to God.

6) Pray with persistence (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). We should persevere in prayer and not quit or be dejected because we have not received an immediate answer. Part of praying in God’s will is believing that, whether His answer is “yes,” “no,” or “wait,” we accept His judgment, submit to His will, and continue to pray.



## ***How does praying with thanksgiving allow us to not grow weary in praying?***

7) Rely on the Spirit of God in prayer. This is a wonderful truth: “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). We have the Spirit’s help in praying. At the times of our deepest depression or sorrow, those times when we feel that we “just cannot pray,” we have the comfort of knowing that the Holy Spirit is actually interceding for us! What an amazing God we have!

What assurance we have when we seek to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh! Then we can have confidence that the Holy Spirit will accomplish His work in presenting our prayers to the Father according to His perfect will and timing, and we can rest in the knowledge that He is working all things together for our good (Romans 8:28).



***The Holy Spirit intercedes for us as we pray to the Father through the Son. Where and how is God calling you to rely on Himself and His wisdom as you pray and seek His will?***



# Lesson 9:

## Why is daily prayer important?

*Quite simply, for followers of Jesus Christ prayer is the best way to communicate with God. Prayer is the vehicle for daily dialogue with the One who created us. The importance of daily communication through prayer cannot be overestimated. It is so important that it is mentioned over 250 times in Scripture.*



***How does the importance of praying regularly encourage or convict you?***

So why is daily prayer so important? First, daily prayer gives us an opportunity to share all aspects of our lives with God. Second, daily prayer gives us the chance to express our gratitude for the things He provides. Third, daily prayer provides the platform for confessing our sin and asking for help in overcoming that sin. Fourth, daily prayer is an act of worship and obedience. And finally, daily prayer is a way to acknowledge who is really in control of our lives. Let's take a look at each of these important reasons in a little more detail.

of our lives with God. Life's circumstances change on a daily basis. In fact, things can go from good to bad to worse in a very short time. God calls us to bring our concerns to Him. He also calls us to share our joys and triumphs with Him. God wants us to call on Him so that He can answer our prayers. He also wants to share with us incredible blessings that we might otherwise have missed had we not reached out to Him through prayer. And finally, James 4:8 instructs us to "draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (ESV). God wants us to be close to Him at all times.

Daily prayer gives us an opportunity to share all aspects



***Read Psalm 13 and Lamentations 5. David and Jeremiah cry out to God. What do they reveal about their relationship with God as they pour out their hearts regarding their circumstances? What can we learn from the conclusion of both of those prayers?***

Daily prayer gives us the chance to express gratitude for the things in life that He provides. We are called to give thanks to the Lord for all the things that He provides and all of the things He does on our behalf (Colossians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18). His goodness and lovingkindness to us should be recognized on a daily basis. First Chronicles 16:34 says to “give

thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.” The psalmist tells us in Psalm 9:1, “I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.” We pray on a daily basis to acknowledge His faithfulness and His abundant provision in our daily lives.



***For what specifically are you grateful to God right now? Why is it important to recount and express gratitude specifically?***

Daily prayer provides the platform for confessing our sin and asking for help repenting of that sin. Let's face it, we all sin daily whether we know it or not. So as followers of Jesus Christ, what must we do? Scripture makes it very clear: "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD. And you forgave the guilt of my sin'" (Psalm 32:5). Tell God what He already knows and do it on a daily basis. Daily prayer time is a great place to unburden one's self from the debilitating

effects of sin. So often Christians walk around with unconfessed sin that hinders our personal relationship with Jesus Christ, when we should humbly submit ourselves and ask for forgiveness in prayer. Another important element of daily prayer is asking God for the strength to repent of our sins. Only God can help us turn from our sins, and, for this to be so, He needs to hear our plea to repent.



***If God already knows everything we have done, why is it important to specifically confess our sins, whether intentional or not?***

Daily prayer is an act of worship and obedience. Perhaps no other verse better summarizes why we should pray on a daily basis than 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." It's God's will for His children to rejoice in Him, to pray to Him and give thanks to Him. To pray without

ceasing simply means that we should make prayer a regular habit and never stop doing so. Prayer also is an act of worship because by praying to Him we are showing Him how much we adore Him. Daily prayer is also an act of obedience that brings joy to the Lord to see His children following His commands.



***How does praying without ceasing change your attitude or outlook on your circumstances?***



Daily prayer is a way to acknowledge who is really in control of our lives. As Christians, we know who is really in control. God is sovereign. Nothing happens without God knowing about it (Isaiah 46:9-10; Daniel 4:17). Because He is sovereign over all, He deserves our worship and praise. “Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the

splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all” (1 Chronicles 29:11). God is our great King and as such He controls every aspect of our lives. Each day we should acknowledge His proper place in our lives humbly and with a reverence reserved for such a great and awesome King.



***How does recognizing God’s sovereignty over our lives impact you?***

Finally, prayer is something that we all should want to do on a daily basis. Yet for many Christians it can be a challenge to humble one’s self in daily prayer. For those who have been walking with the Lord for many years, daily prayer may become stale and lacking in proper conviction or reverence. Whether one is a new believer or an established one, prayer should always be considered as THE best way to speak to God. Imagine not speaking to a loved one or a close friend. How long

would the relationship last? Daily prayer with God is daily fellowship with our heavenly Father. It is truly amazing that God would want to have fellowship with us at all. In fact, the psalmist asks, “What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?” (Psalm 8:4). Daily prayer is a good way to understand this incredible truth and the marvelous privilege God has given us.



***Recommit yourself to praying daily. The Lord wants to hear from you! We need to pray as we depend on Him for everything! As things come to your mind today, commit to bringing them to the Lord in prayer– not just your needs but also your gratitude and praises as well!***



## ***Lesson 10:***

# **Is corporate prayer important?**

*Corporate prayer is an important part of the life of the church, along with worship, sound doctrine, communion, and fellowship.*



***Prayer is not just a personal, individual activity. When have you experienced a need where others have prayed for you? What was the outcome? How does praying with others encourage your faith as you go through difficulty?***

The early church met regularly to learn the doctrine of the apostles, break bread, and pray together (Acts 2:42). When we pray together with other believers, the effects can be very positive. Corporate prayer edifies and unifies us as we share our common faith.

The same Holy Spirit who dwells within each believer causes our hearts to rejoice as we hear praises to our Lord and Savior, knitting us together in a unique bond of fellowship found nowhere else in life.



## ***How does praying with others grow our relationship with others?***

To those who may be alone and struggling with life's burdens, hearing others lift them up to the throne of grace can be a great encouragement. It also builds in us love and concern for others as we intercede for them. At the same time, corporate prayer will only be a reflection of the hearts of the individuals who participate. We are to come to God in humility (James 4:10), truth (Psalm 145:18), obedience (1 John 3:21-22), with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6) and confidence (Hebrews 4:16).

Sadly, corporate prayer can also become a platform for those whose words are directed not to God, but to their hearers. Jesus warned against such behavior in Matthew 6:5-8 where He exhorts us not to be showy, long-winded, or hypocritical in our prayers, but to pray secretly in our own rooms in order to avoid the temptation of using prayer hypocritically.



## ***What are some concerns that people have about praying with others?***

There is nothing in Scripture to suggest that corporate prayers are “more powerful” than individual prayers in the sense of moving the hand of God. Far too many Christians equate prayer with “getting things from God,” and group prayer becomes mainly an occasion to recite a list of our wants. Biblical prayers, however, are multi-faceted, encompassing the whole of the desire to enter into conscious and intimate communion with our holy, perfect, and righteous God. That such a God would bend an ear to His creatures causes praise and adoration to pour forth in abundance (Psalm 27:4; 63:1-8), produces heartfelt repentance and confession (Psalm 51; Luke 18:9-14), generates an outpouring of gratitude and thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6; Colossians 1:12), and creates sincere intercessory pleas on behalf of others (2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2:16).

Prayer, then, is cooperating with God to bring about His plan, not trying to bend Him to our will. As we abandon our own desires in submission to the One who knows our circumstances far better than we ever

could and who “knows what you need before you ask” (Matthew 6:8), our prayers reach their highest level. Prayers offered in submission to the Divine will, therefore, are always answered positively, whether offered by one person or a thousand.

The idea that corporate prayers are more likely to move the hand of God comes largely from a misinterpretation of Matthew 18:19-20, “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” These verses come from a larger passage which addresses the procedures to be followed in the case of church discipline of a sinning member. To interpret them as promising believers a blank check for anything they might agree to ask God for, no matter how sinful or foolish, not only does not fit the context of church discipline, but it denies the rest of Scripture, especially the sovereignty of God.



***Seeing that having more people pray does not make God’s answer different, what could be some potential benefits in praying with others? (See Acts 1:13-14, James 5:14-16, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, and 1 Timothy 2:1-2.)***

In addition, to believe that when “two or three are gathered” to pray, some kind of magical power boost is automatically applied to our prayers is not biblically supportable. Of course Jesus is present when two or three pray, but He is equally present when one believer prays alone, even if that person is separated

from others by thousands of miles. Corporate prayer is important because it creates unity (John 17:22-23) and is a key aspect of believers’ encouraging one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11) and spurring one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).



***What are some prayer requests you have that can be shared with others? How would having others pray with you encourage you in your faith? This week, share at least one request with someone else so you might be encouraged by sharing the burden and they may be encouraged to pray with you.***





## Wrap Up

Now that you have studied ten lessons on questions about prayer, take some time to reflect on what you've learned and how you will put what you've learned into practice.



***How has your understanding of prayer changed or expanded as a result of what you've learned through this study? What are 2-3 truths you learned about prayer that are most meaningful to you?***



***What will you change in your life as a result of this study?***



***Who in your life needs to be encouraged by growing in their understanding of prayer? What will you do as a result of your renewed understanding of prayer?***



## *Reference List*

- Lesson 1: [www.gotquestions.org/what-is-prayer.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-prayer.html)
- Lesson 2: [www.gotquestions.org/purpose-of-prayer.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/purpose-of-prayer.html)
- Lesson 3: [www.gotquestions.org/does-God-hear-my-prayers.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/does-God-hear-my-prayers.html)
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- Lesson 5: [www.gotquestions.org/does-God-answer-prayers.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/does-God-answer-prayers.html)
- Lesson 6: [www.gotquestions.org/unanswered-prayer.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/unanswered-prayer.html)
- Lesson 7: [www.gotquestions.org/what-to-pray-for.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/what-to-pray-for.html)
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- Lesson 9: [www.gotquestions.org/daily-prayer.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/daily-prayer.html)
- Lesson 10: [www.gotquestions.org/corporate-prayer.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/corporate-prayer.html)

All Bible references are quoted from the NIV unless otherwise stated.