

## On Praying

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### Basics

Prayer at its basic is the Christian **talking with God** – i.e speaking to him and hearing from him.

It is one of 3 key spiritual disciplines Jesus told his disciples to do (or what he called “religious duties”) using **“When” not “If”**, meaning it was not just a good to have option. He expected it to be part of “business as usual” for his followers when he addressed prayer (together with fasting and giving) as follows:

- **On Giving/Charity:** “...**When** you give something to a needy person, do not make a big show of it, as the hypocrites do in the houses of worship and on the streets...” (*Matthew 6: 2*)
- **On Prayer:** “**When** you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! They love to stand up and pray in the houses of worship and on the street corners, so that everyone will see them.....” (*Matthew 6: 7*)
- **On Fasting:** “...**And when you fast**, do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites do. They neglect their appearance so that everyone will see that they are fasting... (*Matthew 6: 16*).

As you can see in the above cases, Jesus expected praying to be something that forms a regular part of a Christian’s life. Unfortunately today our prayer life seems to have been whittled down to the routine of “the Lord’s prayer” and only on Sunday or just before a meal... but it shouldn’t be so. Prayer is a lot more than this...

### Examples from the bible

In order to understand prayer some more, I provide you some examples on:

- How to pray
- What prayer does (benefits).

#### How to Pray

1. **Pray specifically.** 1 Chronicles 4:10 GNT <http://bible.com/68/1ch.4.10.gnt>
2. **Pray with confidence- God is attentive.** 1 Peter 3:12 NIV <http://bible.com/111/1pe.3.12.niv>
3. **Devote time to it.** Colossians 4:2 NIV <http://bible.com/111/col.4.2.niv>
4. **Pray all the time (continually).** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV <http://bible.com/111/1th.5.16-18.niv>
5. **Pray about everything!** Ephesians 6:18 NIV <http://bible.com/111/eph.6.18.niv>
6. **Pray trustingly and forgive as you do.** Mark 11:24-25 NIV <http://bible.com/111/mrk.11.24-25.niv>

#### Benefits of prayer

1. **Prayer rescues other Christians** Acts 12:4-5 GNT <http://bible.com/68/act.12.4-5.gnt>
2. **for healing for others.** James 5:16 NIV <http://bible.com/111/jas.5.16.niv>
3. **Prayer reveals mysteries** Jeremiah 33:3 GNT <http://bible.com/68/jer.33.3.gnt>



Start

Grow

Mature

## Today's perspective

It would seem that modern Christians have forgotten how to pray. Is it perhaps that they have restricted themselves to only reading the New Testament and missed some of the ancient methods which formed the basis upon which Jesus gave his disciples the "Lord's prayer"? I have found that some of the examples of prayers in the Old Testament reveal great prayers – revealing the proper perspective of our prayers – God is Holy and Mighty and it is a privilege to come to him with requests.

Knowing this then gives even more special privilege when Jesus in the Lord's Prayer tells us to call God "Abba" – Father. Seeing His Holiness and the reverence for him as revealed in the Old Testament prayers should enable you pray with an appropriate mix of boldness, humility and awe (wonder, praise).

I learnt how to pray earnestly from reading Old Testament accounts. Here is an example I found illuminating. It is from when King Solomon had finished building the temple and was dedicating it to God. I have only taken extracts of the full prayer which is in 1 Kings 8: 22 – 61(NIV).

I highlight in bold some interesting points for you to observe, can you see some of these in the prayer?

- **Physical Position (e.g standing and hands to heaven)**
- **Praising God**
- **confirmation of promises from his Word**
- **Humility in request.**
- **Confession/Praying for mercy/forgiveness**
- **Blessing others.**

*"Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel, **spread out his hands toward heaven** and said:*

***"LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.***

*"Now LORD, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, 'You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me faithfully as you have done.'*

***"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.***

*When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplications to the LORD, he rose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out toward heaven. He stood and **blessed the whole assembly of Israel** in a loud voice, saying: "Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses..."*

God indeed heard Solomon's prayer and just in the next chapter in 1 Kings 9: 1- 4 (NIV). We read:

*The Lord appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. The Lord said to him: "I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there. As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, 'You shall never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.'*

I share with you **some tips** that I have found helped me develop my prayer life:

- **Use Psalms to learn how to pray.** The book of psalms is generally referred to as the "prayer book" of the bible. Consider reading a psalm (or part of it) daily as part of your quiet time, it will help you understand authentic prayer. In reading the psalms, I for example learnt to put prayer into perspective – you are praying to a Holy God. Praise him, Bless him, Worship him. Our prayers often don't incorporate this element. Including it will help your prayers. It is no wonder Jesus taught us to start the Lord's Prayer with Praise/Worship: "*Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be your name...*"
- **Maintain a prayer journal.** God answers prayers. Maintaining a prayer journal which lists what you are praying for (e.g situations, people) including dates will help you see what God is doing in your life. Review it regularly and update it when the prayers are answered. As an example, Use your phone's note facility to help you record your prayers and answers.
- **Use other spiritual resources** (e.g audio sermon, spiritual author book, video) as part of your devotional. These will help you as you read or watch to recall things you should pray for. For example watching a video on the Holy Spirit will prompt you to pray for Holy Spirit filling.

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Reading the bible  
Fasting  
Giving

## Your turn

What will you now do differently? Examples to think about include:

- *keeping a prayer journal* and include in it your prayer requests and answered prayer.
- *Developing a list of spiritual resources* (e.g audio, video, book) which you can use during your devotional time (and help you to pray).
- *How will you make prayer a part of your normal daily routine?*

Write here