

Defining Prayer:

What is prayer in the Bible? Prayer in the Bible is how believers of God talk to him. It's how they make their praise and requests known. The Scriptures are filled with beautiful examples of people crying out to God and asking for his strength, guidance, healing and more.

As a Christian, I can learn from the prayers in the Bible. They can encourage me as I read answered prayers and give me hope that God truly does hear my prayers. This leads to what is the purpose of prayer is.

If we don't understand the purpose of prayer in the Bible, how can we understand the purpose of prayer in our own life?

By understanding how prayer is used in the Bible, you can better understand why Christians pray and what exactly they pray for.

The Purpose of Prayer for Christians

The purpose of prayer in the Bible is to make your praise or request known to God. Through prayer, men and women of God were able to ask Him for deliverance, mercy, healing, and miracles.

The reason Christians pray today is for the same reasons why people prayed in the Bible: to speak to God and ask for healing, forgiveness, and direction. Praying is how Christians grow a deeper relationship with Christ and how they know the direction he wants their life to go in.

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know. (Jeremiah 33:3)

I have confidence that God hears what I pray and I hope these Biblical examples of prayer will encourage you to believe that God hears what you speak to Him when you pray!

5 Examples of Prayer in Scripture

As we read stories about how people in the Bible prayed, we can be reminded that God longs for us to pray to Him so that He may answer us.

Abraham's Prayer for Sodom & Gomorrah

The story of Abraham pleading on behalf of Sodom takes place in Genesis 18:16-33. Sodom and Gomorrah were two cities filled with wickedness, sexual immorality: rape, homosexuality, and premarital intercourse. These people lived without any regard for the law.

On the other hand, Abraham was a man of God, therefore, God told him about his plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their exceedingly grave sins.

Abraham replied with a request for mercy, he said, ““Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”

Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Abraham asks God another question, would he destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if he found 50 righteous people within the cities?

Graciously, God says for the sake of 50 righteous people, he would spare the cities. But, Abraham was not done with his request for mercy, he goes on to ask what if were 45 people, then

40, what about 30, and all the way down to ten people. Again, God declares he would not destroy the city if ten righteous people can be found.

God did not find ten people within Sodom and Gomorrah who were righteous. Genesis 19:23 says, “Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah.”

Abraham’s prayer for mercy is powerful because he easily could have shrugged off the people within Sodom and Gomorrah and assume they are all wicked in God’s eyes. On the contrary, he cries out to God asking him to spare the city if there are just ten people who are righteous.

This story taught me that I can speak daring prayers while asking for God to show mercy. Often times, we like to stay comfortable with what we pray, but stories like this one show us that we can pray boldly knowing God is just and will do what is right!

Jacob’s Prayer for Deliverance

The story of Jacob asking for deliverance comes from Genesis 39:9-12. He was about to meet with his brother, Esau, and was fearful.

You see, Jacob had taken Esau’s blessing years ago and believed his brother would kill him. In the midst of his fear he prayed to the Lord saying, “Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. But you have said, ‘I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.’”

When Jacob finally reunites with Esau, he is not killed, instead, they both embrace each other and wept. Jacob’s prayer was answered. Instead of Esau acting out in hatred and anger, he chose to love his brother and let go of the past! In the end, Esau blesses Jacob by giving him some of his men.

This story of prayer and redemption is moving because we see first hand how afraid Jacob was to being blessed by the very man he feared! I am blessed by this story and knowing that God hears our prayers even when we are afraid.

Moses’ Prayer for Mercy

Moses' prayer for mercy comes from Exodus 32. Moses was on a mountain talking with God while the Israelites were making a golden calf to worship and have as an idol. God spoke to Moses that his anger burned against the Israelites because of their sin.

Moses prayed back and said, "Lord, why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, "It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth?" Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever'" (Exodus 32:11-14).

After Moses left the mountain he found the Israelites dancing and worshipping the calf, therefore, God struck them with a plague.

Moses' prayer for mercy shows me that I can pray for people around me who are living in sin. I can ask God to reveal Himself to them and have mercy on them while they are living far from Him!

Even though God couldn't have mercy on the Israelites because of their egregious sins, he still heard what Moses prayed.

Hannah's Prayer for a Son

The story of Hannah asking the Lord for a son comes from 1 Samuel. Since Hannah was of old age and had yet to conceive a son, she was in deep distress and she cried out to God saying,

"O Lord of Heaven's Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the Lord, his hair will never be cut."

1 Samuel 1:11

Her prayer was spoken outside of the temple and the Priest Eli heard her and thought she was drunk. She told him she was not drunk but had been calling out to God in her distress and sorrow.

Eli chooses to bless her and say, “Go in peace! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him” (17).

God heard her prayer and gave her a son who she named Samuel and after he was weaned she brought him back to the temple. She found Eli and said to him, “I asked the Lord to give me this boy, and he has granted my request. Now I am giving him to the Lord, and he will belong to the Lord his whole life” (27-28).

The beauty of this story is that God heard Hannah in her time of great anguish and she conceived a baby boy. Hannah held true to her word and gave up her son to serve with Eli in the temple.

I learned from this story that God hears my prayers when I am in a valley when I see a no way out I can still pray to God during this time and rest in the truth that He hears me.

As a young adult who has grown up in the church my whole life, I have been around people who pray and have taught me the importance of prayer. I know that Christians pray to communicate with God, but recently, I wanted to dive deeper into the meaning of prayer in the Bible. I grew a desire to truly understand what the Scriptures say about prayer and what I can learn from these prayers.



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Jonah’s Prayer for Salvation

Jonah’s prayer of salvation is found in Jonah 2. He had disobeyed God and tried to run away from God, he ended up being swallowed up by a large fish in the ocean.

While in the fish he prayed,

“I called out to the Lord, out of my distress,

and he answered me;

out of the belly of Sheol I cried,

and you heard my voice.

For you cast me into the deep,

into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows
passed over me.

Then I said, 'I am driven away
from your sight;
yet I shall again look
upon your holy temple.'

The waters closed in over me to take my life;
the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped about my head
at the roots of the mountains.

I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me forever;
yet you brought up my life from the pit,

O Lord my God.

When my life was fainting away,

I remembered the Lord,

and my prayer came to you,

into your holy temple.

Those who pay regard to vain idols

forsake their hope of steadfast love.

But I with the voice of thanksgiving

will sacrifice to you;

what I have vowed I will pay.

Salvation belongs to the Lord!”

Jonah’s prayer shows how he met God even while in the fish, he realized the importance of following God and knew he needed to stop running away from God.

This prayer shows me that we can pray for forgiveness wherever we are at and God will meet us there. I also learned that we must humble ourselves before God and admit when we are wrong and be willing to seek forgiveness.

No matter how far away we run from God, He still sees us and is waiting for us to turn back to Him.

7 Types of Prayer + Their Purpose

Each one of these types of pray: faith, petition, thanksgiving, intercession, a song, and corporate have a Biblical foundation. They each serve a different purpose and you can easily incorporate them into your prayers.

I hope these prayers help you better understand the many ways you can pray!

Prayer of Faith

A prayer of faith means you pray having faith God hears you and will do what is best in the situation. No matter how big or small the prayer you can pray with faith.

This is easier said than done when we come face to face while trials, but you can hold on to the truth that God is listening to your prayers. He sees you in the midst of your heartache and is still with you. He will never leave you or forsake you!

And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.

Matthew 21:22

Prayer of Petition

A prayer of petition is making a request to God. You can pray for anything you may need or someone you know needs. Ideas of what you can pray for:

Health

Healing

Work

Peace

Relationships

Strength

Wisdom

Don't be afraid to speak your needs to God, He is waiting to hear your voice. He longs for you to pray to Him and lay your cares and worries at His feet and admit you need Him!

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Phillipians 4:6

Prayer of Thanksgiving

A prayer of thanksgiving is giving thanks and gratitude to God. Praying this will help you stop worrying about your circumstances and fix your eyes, God. You can find peace while praising God and reminding yourself how amazing the God you serve is.

We can pray thanksgiving no matter how we feel or what we are going through. God is still with us during the hard times and we can still praise His name in the middle of a storm.

By praying a prayer of thanksgiving, you are giving God glory and honoring His name!

No matter what happens, always be thankful for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

I Thessalonians 5:18

Prayer of Intercession

Prayer of intercession is when you plead and cry out to God for his help or deliverance for yourself or on behalf of another person.

Intercession can be done by yourself or in a group. When you intercede, you are praying earnestly for God to come into whatever situation you are praying for.

You are admitting to God that you need Him to come and intervene. During this time, you are pressing into His presence and seeking Him with your whole heart. Speak your heart to God and declare His presence!

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. 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 8:26-34

A Song of Prayer

A song of prayer is singing a song while praying. An example of this is found in Exodus after the Israelites had been freed from Egypt they sang,

I will sing to the Lord,
for he is highly exalted.

Both horse and driver
he has hurled into the sea.

“The Lord is my strength and my defense;
he has become my salvation.

He is my God, and I will praise him,
my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

The Lord is a warrior;
the Lord is his name.

Pharaoh’s chariots and his army
he has hurled into the sea.

The best of Pharaoh’s officers
are drowned in the Red Sea.

The deep waters have covered them;
they sank to the depths like a stone.

Your right hand, Lord,
was majestic in power.

Your right hand, Lord,

shattered the enemy...

The Lord reigns

forever and ever" (Exodus 15:1-18).

The Israelites expressed their gratitude through a song of prayer to the Lord. We can also sing a song of praise and declare GOD's faithfulness and mercy.

You can sing a song of praise even before the battle has been won, declare victory through a song in the name of Jesus!

For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.

Deuteronomy 20:4

Corporate Prayer

Corporate prayer is where you pray along with fellow believers. When you pray in a group, it is powerful. You are able to pray for each other and others.

You can join together praying and interceding with a group of people. You are able to be encouraged as you pray in a group and ask for God's presence to come in a powerful way.

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

Matthew 18:20

20 Scriptures about the Importance of Prayer

These scriptures about prayer can be used to encourage you and be prayed during your own personal prayer time.

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

Jeremiah 33:3

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.” **1 John 5:14**

“Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.” **1 Chronicles 16:11**

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” **Mark 11:25**

“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous

and his ears are attentive to their prayer,

but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” **1 Peter 3:12**

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” **Mark 11:24**

“The Lord is near to all who call on him,

to all who call on him in truth.” **Psalms 145:18**

“Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.”

Jeremiah 29:12

“But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” **James 1:6**

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6

“But to you who are listening, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” **Luke 6:27-28**

“Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.” **3 John 1:2**

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” **Matthew 26:41**

“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”
John 14:13

“For I know that through your prayers and God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.” **Philippians 1:19**

“So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.”

Ezra 8:23

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” **James 5:16**

“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” **Acts 2:21**

“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” **Acts 4:31**

“This poor man called, and the Lord heard him;

he saved him out of all his troubles.” **Psalm 34:6**

12 Scriptures of Praise to Pray

Remember when you pray it's important to take time to honor and glorify God. These 12 Scriptures of praise can be used while you are praying.

“In my distress, I called to the Lord;

I cried to my God for help.

From his temple he heard my voice;

my cry came before him, into his ears.” **Psalm 18:6**

“By day the Lord directs his love,

at night his song is with me—

a prayer to the God of my life.” **Psalm 42:8**

“I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors:

You have given me wisdom and power,

you have made known to me what we asked of you,

you have made known to us the dream of the king.” **Daniel 2:23**

“I cried out to him with my mouth;

his praise was on my tongue.” **Psalm 66:17**

“Lord, hear my prayer,
listen to my cry for mercy;
in your faithfulness and righteousness
come to my relief.” **Psalm 143:1**

“In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before you
and wait expectantly.” **Psalm 5:3**

“Praise the Lord, all nations!
Extol him, all peoples!
For great is his steadfast love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Praise the Lord! **Psalm 117:1-2**

“May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
Lord, my Rock, and my Redeemer.” **Psalm 19:14**

“For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;

my soul knows it very well.

My frame was not hidden from you,

when I was being made in secret,

intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance;

in your book were written, every one of them,

the days that were formed for me,

when as yet there was none of them.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them! **Psalm 139:13-17**

“Why are you cast down, O my soul,

and why are you in turmoil within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,

my salvation and my God.” **Psalm 42:11**

“When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord;

he brought me into a spacious place.” **Psalm 118:5**

“Arise, Lord! Lift up your hand, O God.

Do not forget the helpless.” **Psalm 10:12**

Christians pray to God because He hears their prayers; He is listening, so they bring forth their praise and requests. The Bible shows us stories of how God stayed faithful to His people and heard them every time they called out to Him.

We can pray to God on the mountain top and in the valley and be confident that He hears us anytime we call out to Him. Prayer is how we express our hearts to God. Without prayer, we are left trying to figure out this life in our own strength and we will fail, but with prayer, we can seek and find our strength in the Lord!