

Learning from the Prayers in the Scriptures

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Introduction

Of all the activities of God's people, prayer stands among the highest spiritual response and act of worship, yet it is perhaps the most neglected. Many Christians talk about the importance of prayer, and desire to communicate with their Lord, but find it so difficult to be faithful in prayer.

In this Bible Study some great prayers will be brought before you. These are prayers prayed by men and women long ago who realized that God is near to them, and He longs to answer and bless His faithful ones. My desire is that you will come to love your God more, and that you will draw near to Him daily.

Through prayer ordinary men and women called out to the Lord in their distress, praised Him in their joy, and thanked and worshiped Him in everyday life. For some it was as habitual as eating their daily food, and resting at night.

One of the key Hebrew words for prayer is *palal*. This word means "to intercede." The Bible assumes that God's people will pray, as they are dependant on Him for everything, and that they will intervene for those whom they love.

My hope is that you will come to realize the power of prayer, and the joy it will bring to your life as you relate to your God and Saviour Jesus Christ in every circumstance. Prayer does not change God, He is unchangeable (Mal 3:6), but prayer changes us. God uses prayer to accomplish His purposes. Prayer touches the heart of God, and brings forgiveness and healing. It brings courage, protection and victory over sin. Prayer is the remedy for fear, and will calm every anxious heart resulting in serenity beyond human understanding.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil 4:6-7).

Prayer is a precious gift from God - a gift that none of us should ignore. When we pray we come into the presence of God presenting our thanks and humble requests. As we come to God on His terms, so He promises to hear and answer our prayers.

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chron 7:14).

You will come across different types of prayer, for example adoration, confessional, thanksgiving and supplication. All of which I trust will become a regular part of your life as you pour out your soul before your heavenly Father.

Prayer 1 - Abraham: Learning to Intercede for Others

Prayer is the great privilege of the children of God. This was recognized long ago, as Moses says:

What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? (Deut 4:7)

Jesus Christ, our great high priest, has opened a door for us which makes prayer an opportunity to relate to our God at any time, and with any request. Hence, the writer to the Hebrews could say:

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Heb 4:16).

There are many kinds of prayers in the Bible. In this lesson we will learn about intercession, using Abraham as our example.

INTERCESSION is a form of prayer in which the petitioner stands between God and some great need.

Read Genesis 18:22-33

- 1) Describe Abraham's relationship to the Lord? (Heb 11:8-19)

- 2) Read verse 22. Who were the men who turned away and went towards Sodom?

- 3) Abraham "stood before the Lord", and "came near" (v 22, 23). What is significant about these statements? How is it that we can draw near to God? (Read Lev 9:5; Num 3:38; Deut 5:23; 1 Sam 14:36; 1 Kgs 18:36; 2 Chron 20:13; Ps 73:28; Heb 7:19; 10:22; Jms 4:8).

- 4) Why did the Lord say, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is very great? (v20).

- 5) What was Abraham's concern about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? And what was his strategy for his concern?
- 6) What is significant about the statement "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" How does this bring you comfort?
- 7) What does this passage teach us about the character of God?
- 8) Look up the following verses and note who is interceding? For whom? And why? (Num 21:7; 1 Sam 7:5; Lk 22:32; Rom 8:26)
- 9) Record what you have learned today that would help you in your prayer life and especially to be a better intercessor?
- 10) Ask God to help you love Him, and others more. Then pray for three people you know who have great needs.

Prayer 2 - Moses: Praising God for Victory

The deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt foreshadows Christ's deliverance of His people from sin and death. Paul writes:

For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col 1:13).

Deliverance was a great theme in Scripture, and will be among God's people throughout the ages to come, as Paul again says of Christ:

who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us (2Co 1:10).

Hence, praising God for His deliverance is often on the lips of His servants, as we shall see from the time of Moses.

Read Exodus 15:1-19

- 1) What was the background to the song of Moses? Briefly record what happened.

- 2) To whom did Moses and the children of Israel sing this song? (v1)

- 3) List the attributes of God which Moses brings out in this song.

- 4) How many times does Moses refer to God as being his own (*my ...*) in verse 2? How would you describe your relationship with God? What changes will you make to draw closer to Him and enjoy a more intimate prayer life?

- 5) Some say that the Israelites could have crossed the Red Sea because the water was at such a low level that no miracle was required. How would you answer this? (See v4 and 5)
- 6) What is significant about the phrase "your right hand"? (v6)
- 7) What did Moses mean when he spoke of "the blast of your nostrils ..." (v8) and "you blew with your wind" (v10). What types of figure of speech are these?
- 8) Why did the nations mentioned in verses 14 – 16 tremble?
- 9) Make a list of the lessons you have learned about prayer from this song to the Lord. Then pray a prayer praising the Lord for delivering you from sin and its penalty.

Prayer 3 - Hannah: From a Sore Heart, to a Rejoicing Heart

Hannah's devotion to the Lord found fruition in her son, Samuel. Her trust has been an inspiration to godly women throughout the centuries.

Her amazing prayer includes a glimpse of the establishment of the coming Messianic kingdom, and her prayer was also apparently in the mind of Mary after giving birth to the Messiah (Lk 1:46-55).

Read 1 Samuel 2:1-11

- 1) Briefly describe the situation in Israel into which Hannah was born and was raised.

- 2) What was her family situation? And what caused her grief? How did her grief turn to joy?

- 3) What is the meaning of "my horn is exalted"? (v2)

- 4) Who were her enemies? And how does she respond towards her enemies? (v2).

5) What are the main attributes of God which Hannah brings out in her prayer?

6) What other themes does she focus on in her prayer?

7) Hannah speaks of the Lord bringing low and lifting up (v7). How and when did He humble the following: Goliath, Saul, Nabal, Absalom, King Uzziah, King Herod, and David?

8) How and when will the Lord judge the ends of the earth? (v10)

9) Who does "his anointed" (v10) refer to?

10) Write out the key lessons you have learned from Hannah's prayer and pray a prayer to the Lord applying these principles to your situation

Prayer 4 – David: A Prayer of Confession (Part 1)

We all fail, again and again. Even as Christians we find ourselves doing things we hate doing, and need to crawl back to God seeking His forgiveness.

Even the man after God's own heart, David, found himself confessing his sin on a number of occasions. Probably the one which was his biggest downfall was the sin of adultery with Bathsheba, and the murder of her husband, Uriah.

After repenting of these sins David penned Psalms 32 and 51. These are psalms which teach us the importance of confession in our prayers. When we fail to confess sin, we break fellowship with God, and prayer becomes a meaningless exercise. But genuine repentance will bring us back to God, and to enjoy intimate fellowship with our Saviour.

Read Psalm 32

1) What happens when we refuse to confess our sin? (v3-4)

2) What is confession? (v5)

3) What are the results of confession? (v1-2; 10-11)

Read Psalm 51

- 4) Who do we sin against, first and foremost? (v4) Explain.

- 5) Note two ways in which confession brings us freedom (see verses 13-15).

- 6) What promise is given to the Christian who confesses his sin in 1 Jn 1:9?

- 7) Spend time before God, dwelling on His holiness and confessing your sins to Him. Take comfort in His promise of forgiveness!

Prayer 5 – David: A Prayer for the Converted (Part 2)

Conversion involves turning to Christ in repentance and trusting Him for salvation. God then forgives us and makes us new people. Paul describes this beautifully to the Galatians:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal 2:20).

The blessings of conversion are wonderful, and difficult to describe. David, however, does a great job in Psalm 103.

Read Psalm 103

- 1) What are the main themes in this Psalm?

- 2) How would you outline this Psalm?

- 3) Make a list of all the Lord's benefits to those who are converted.

- 4) List God's attributes found in the Psalm.

5) How many similes can you count in this psalm? Where are they found, and what is the significance of each one?

6) Read Ephesians 1, and then list all the blessings given to those who are converted.

7) Pray a prayer praising God for all His benefits to you. Use some of the ideas of the Psalmist, but also think of some which are specific to you.

Prayer 6 – Solomon: A Prayer of Dedication

God entrusted Solomon with the building of the temple, an enormous task which required a lot of resources and skill. The temple became the centre of worship for God's people in the Old Testament, and a great deal of significance was attached to it. We will find out more in this lesson.

At the dedication of the temple, Solomon prayed this prayer which has some wonderful truths about God and His relationship to His people. The Lord was to be at the centre of life for His people, who were to love Him with heart, soul and mind. They also had the privilege of bringing every problem to their Creator God.

Read 1 Kings 8:22-54

- 1) How does Solomon address the Lord in his prayer?

- 2) What is Solomon's posture as he prays? Is posture important? Think about how other godly men and women prayed.

- 3) What did Solomon say to the fact that God would dwell in the Temple? What was the significance of the Temple in the Old Testament times? (v43)

4) In what situations were the Israelites called upon to go to the Temple and pray? (v30-35)

5) What theological themes are brought out in Solomon's prayer?

6) Solomon dedicated the Temple to the Lord. Paul says that we are the temple of the living God (1 Cor 3:16; 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16). Have you dedicated yourself entirely to the Lord? (Rom 12:1-2). Or are there some areas you are keeping from Him?

7) Being effective in prayer involves a total commitment to the Lord, and taking all our desires and needs to Him. What issues do you need to bring to the Lord right now? Pray, asking the Lord to help.

Lesson 7 – Elijah: Praying when you are down

Even godly men and women get discouraged. David, the man after God's own heart found himself in a pit at times.

In this lesson we will see how the prophet Elijah at the end of his days had a struggle with discouragement, and we will note what caused him to fall from a mountain top experience with God, to wallowing in self pity and despair.

We will also observe how others were rescued from a pit of despair.

Read 1 Kings 19

- 1) List the things Elijah had previously prayed for.

- 2) Jezebel was a Phoenician who became queen and wife of King Ahab. How did she contribute to the downfall of Israel?

- 3) What caused Elijah to fear Jezebel? Why does he go to Beersheba?

- 4) Why does he want God to take his life? (Compare with Jonah 4:3, 8; Jb 6:8, 9; Numb 11:10-15; Jer 20:14-18)

- 5) Read verse 4. What was wrong with Elijah's prayer?

- 6) Where is Horeb? What significant event happened there?

- 7) What caused Elijah to become so discouraged?

- 8) What are some clear signs of discouragement?
- 9) What is the meaning and significance of the "still small voice?" (v12)
- 10) Why does God question Elijah saying "What are you doing here?" (v13)
- 11) What was significant about anointing Hazael, Jehu and Elisha? Who were they? And what would be accomplished through them?
- 12) The psalmist was sometimes discouraged too. But notice the positive example of response - Read Psalm 42:11 and 43:5. Also read Psalm 73 and note what helped the psalmist to be lifted out of his discouragement.
- 13) How does Paul help us to deal with being downhearted? Read 2 Cor 4:1, 16; Gal 6:9; Phil 4:6-9
- 14) Think of a time when you were really discouraged. How do you think you should have prayed at that time? Write out such a prayer.

Lesson 8 – Hezekiah: Praying in a Crisis (Part 1)

All of the kings of Israel since the divided kingdom were unfaithful to the Lord. But a few of the kings of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) remained true to the Lord and His Word. Hezekiah was one such king.

The kings were not only to rule the land, but were also expected to be spiritual role models to God's people, and lead by example. In the tough times they were supposed to call the people to turn their eyes to the Lord. Lets see how Hezekiah did this.

Read 2 Kings 19:14-19

- 1) Give a summary of the recent history of Israel in the time of Hezekiah, especially with regards to the Assyrian power.

- 2) Over what nation did Hezekiah reign? What kind of a king was he? (Read 2 Kgs 18:1-8). How did this prepare him for the crisis ahead?

- 3) What triggered Hezekiah to pray on this particular occasion?

- 4) Why did he go to the house of the Lord?

- 5) When Hezekiah received the letter threatening him, we are told that he spread the letter before the Lord. Why did he do this?

- 6) What are the attributes of God which Hezekiah focuses upon in his prayer?
Why is each one significant?
- 7) In the beginning of his prayer Hezekiah refers to God as "the God of Israel."
But in his closing plea he addresses God as "our God." Why is this so important?
- 8) What is the ultimate motive in prayer? (v19)
- 9) Share one or two testimonies in your group demonstrating how God was called upon in a very difficult situation, and how He answered.

Lesson 9 – Jehoshaphat: Praying in a Crisis (Part 2)

Jehoshaphat was another king who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and turned God's people to look to the Lord in a time of crisis. His prayer too is a wonderful model for us when we are going through a severe trial.

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-25

- 1) Give a brief historical background of the following groups:
 - a. The Moabites (v1)
 - b. The Ammonites (v1)
 - c. The People from Mt. Seir (v10)
- 2) Read 2 Chronicles 17:3-9. How did Jehoshaphat prepare himself for the crisis which lay ahead?
- 3) How does our past prepare us for the future? – Think on this question especially with regards to our reactions to tragedy.
- 4) What sea is being referred to in verse 2? How far is Engedi from Jerusalem? What does this tell us about the seriousness of the crisis?
- 5) What was Jehoshaphat's initial response to the news of the attack? How does he overcome this?

- 6) Why does he call all the people to the temple?
- 7) What attributes of God does he appeal to in his prayer?
- 8) How is Jehoshaphat an example to us when we have done all we could but still feel helpless? Read Ps 103:19; Jb 42:2; Prov 21:1.
- 9) Why is it so important to incorporate our knowledge of God into our prayers?
- 10) Where is the origin of the quote in verse 9?
- 11) Write out all the key phrases in Jehoshaphat's prayer which you believe will help you when you are in a crisis.
- 12) Share another testimony or two in your group demonstrating how God was called upon in a very difficult situation, and how He answered.

Lesson 10 – Daniel: Consistent Praying

Daniel is remembered for his courage and uncompromising integrity, but he was also a man who was committed to prayer. This, no doubt, was a contributing factor to his godly character.

Being consistent in prayer is something that most of us struggle with, and so the story of Daniel, and his example of a model prayer will hopefully encourage us to a more regular prayer life.

Read Daniel 9:1-19

- 1) King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a statue (chapter 2) consisting of four minerals which represented different empires. Match the mineral with the empire:

Mineral	Empire
Gold	Rome
Silver	Greece
Bronze	Babylon
Iron and clay	Medo-Persia

- 2) Who wrote the book of Daniel? (v2)

- 3) How long was the Jewish exile in Babylon? (v2) What was significant about this period of time? (see 2 Chron 36:21)

- 4) Read Daniel 6:10. What was Daniel's prayer life like? Was this a new habit?

- 5) What was the significance of Daniel fasting and putting on sack cloth and ashes when he prayed?

- 6) What was the primary purpose of Daniel's prayer?
- 7) Compare Daniel's address with that of Nehemiah's. (see Neh 9:33)
- 8) What equipped Daniel to be a man of prayer (v1-4)?
- 9) What observations do you notice about Daniel's confession (v5-14)?
- 10) In his request for blessing, what does he appeal to? (v15-19). In these verses, what do we see is Daniel's ultimate concern?
- 11) What has impacted you most from Daniel's prayer which should have an influence upon your prayer life?

Lesson 11 – Jonah: Praying after Disobedience

The Lord had a particular purpose for Jonah. He was to go and preach to the powerful, but godless citizens of Nineveh (the capital of Assyria). Jonah, however, refused to go and his disobedience took him in the opposite direction. He ran until he could go no further. The Lord got his attention when he was in the belly of a fish. From there Jonah prayed, and we have many lessons to learn from his calling out to God from the bottom of the ocean.

Read Jonah 2:1-10

- 1) Read verse 2 again, then look up the following references: Num 20:17; 1 Sam 7:9; 2 Sam 22:7; Ps 3:4; 138:3. Observe the trend and write what it tells you about the Lord.

- 2) How does Jonah view his circumstances? (v3)

- 3) What is the meaning of the phrase, "out of the belly of Sheol I cried?"

- 4) How did Jonah view his relationship to God after disobeying, and being cast into the sea? Was there hope? (v4)

- 5) When we disobey God, we often don't feel like praying. How should Jonah's prayer change this thinking?

- 6) How does Jonah's experience show there is hope for us, even when we have depressing circumstances which are self inflicted?
- 7) Read verse 8. What does this mean, and why do you think Jonah says this? Name some worthless idols.
- 8) Read also verse 9. What do you think he means? What might he have vowed?
- 9) Jonah says, "Salvation is of the Lord" (v9). Explain how this is true both physically and spiritually.
- 10) How do you see God's sovereignty in Jonah's circumstances and prayer?
- 11) What key lessons have you learned about prayer from this portion of Scripture?

Lesson 12 – Habakkuk: Praying in Tough Times

Habakkuk was a prophet who had questions which he struggled with, but he came to find answers. He lived in very difficult days, and even harder times were to be expected in the future. Nevertheless, he learned that he could still be joyful, and praise God in spite of the difficulties. In this lesson we will learn how.

Read Habakkuk 3

- 1) Read verse 2. Habakkuk said that he heard the Lord's speech. Sum up what the Lord said to him by reading the previous two chapters.

- 2) Is fear ever a good thing? How and why was Habakkuk afraid? (v2)

- 3) Why does Habakkuk pray "in wrath remember mercy?" (v2)

- 4) Summarize verses 3-15. What is Habakkuk saying in this part of his prayer? What happened at Teman and Mt Paran? (see v3; Deut 33:2 and Judges 5:4)

- 5) Read verse 4. What is being described? (see Exod 40:34-38)

6) Why is it so important for us to remember and reflect upon what the Lord has done for us in the past?

7) Who does "your anointed" refer to? (v13). Support your answer.

8) Who is being referred to in each of the following?

They came out to scatter (v14)

You walked through the sea (v15)

9) Read verse 16. How can we rest in "the day of trouble?"

10) Memorize Habakkuk 3:17-18

11) Habakkuk prayed, "O Lord, revive your work..." (v2). Pray a prayer asking God to revive His work in your life, your church, community or wherever else you believe it is most needed.

12) If you have been challenged by what Habakkuk says in verses 17-19, then praise God for what He has done for you, and resolve to rejoice in Him through thick and thin.

Lesson 13 – Mary: Praying to Magnify the Lord

Many of us love to hear the Christmas story of how the Lord Jesus came into this world. It is a great time to reflect on the coming of our Savior into the world, and to use as an evangelistic opportunity.

Could you imagine how Mary took the news from the angel of her conception by the Holy Spirit, and that she would soon give birth to the Messiah, Immanuel – God with us! Her prayer expresses it beautifully.

Read Luke 1:46-55

1) Mary's prayer has been called the Magnificat. Why? What does this mean?

2) How do we know Mary's heart was filled with the Word of God?

3) Read Philippians 1:20. How does Paul want to magnify the Lord in his circumstances?

4) List some ways we can magnify the Lord:

In our actions

In our speech

In our thoughts

In our prayers

- 5) Compare Mary's prayer to Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10
- 6) Mary was a godly woman, but how do we know she was not sinless? (v47)
- 7) What are the reasons Mary gives which cause her to praise God? (v48-55)
- 8) List the attributes of God you can find in her prayer.
- 9) Which of these attributes brings you the most comfort in your life right now? Why?
- 10) Pray a prayer which focuses on who God is, thanking Him for what He has done for you.

Lesson 14 – Jesus: Praying according to the Master (Part 1)

So far we have learned many lessons about prayer from a variety of godly men and women, but there is no one more qualified to teach us to pray than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. We have two accounts of this – one in Matthew, and one in Luke. We will look at Matthew's account.

Read Matthew 6:5-13

1) Where and when does Jesus give this teaching on prayer?

2) How does Jesus describe hypocritical prayer? (v5-7)

3) Why is it so precious to refer to God in our prayers as "our Father?" (v9)

4) What do the following mean?

Hallowed be Your Name (v9)

Your kingdom come (v10)

Your will be done (v10)

5) What are our "debts" which need to be forgiven? (v12)

6) Why should we pray "do not lead us into temptation?" Does God tempt anyone? (see Jms 1). What is being said in this part of the prayer?

7) Why is it so important to forgive others?

8) Some say this should be called "the disciple's prayer" rather than "the Lord's prayer." What do you think?

9) Read the following and note what Jesus teaches us about prayer: Mt 5:44; 7:7-11; 14:23; 21:22; Lk 6:28; 18:1; Jn 14:13.

10) Think about your prayer life. How do your prayers compare with the model prayer which Jesus taught? Consider what is lacking, and how you can pray more like how our Master teaches us to pray.

6) Why might this prayer be called “the Lord’s Prayer”, rather than the one in Matthew 6:9-13?

7) How does Jesus’ prayer show the relationship between God and His people?

8) Read verse 12. How does this verse bring you comfort?

9) What a wonderful day it will be in heaven when we “behold the glory of Jesus Christ.” (v24). How can we begin doing this, even now (2 Cor 3:18; Ps 27:4)?

Lesson 16 – Paul: Praying Kingdom Prayers

Paul the apostle had been an enemy and persecutor of the church, but the Lord stopped him on the road to Damascus and changed his heart and the direction of his life. He became the apostle to the Gentiles, and learned to love the Lord and His church more than he did his own soul.

The heart of the apostle is seen in many of his letters to the churches. One such letter is his thank you letter to the Philippians. In this letter he prays a short prayer, but this prayer teaches us some amazing lessons.

Read Philippians 1:9-11

- 1) Looking at the previous verses in chapter 1, what evidence is there of Paul's love for the Philippians? How often did he pray for them? What things did he pray for regularly? (v4-5)
- 2) How did the Philippians participate in the Gospel? (v5)
- 3) Why could Paul be so confident that the Philippian believers would continue serving Christ? (v6)
- 4) List the specific prayer requests mentioned in verses 9-11.
- 5) What are things that are excellent? (v10)
- 6) Why should we pray for sincerity? Look up the original meaning of this word.

- 7) What and when is the Day of Christ? (v10)
- 8) What kind of knowledge is Paul praying for?
- 9) Why is it so important to pray for discernment?
- 10) What is the ultimate purpose of prayer? (v11)
- 11) What does Paul teach us about the importance of prayer in the following verses: 1 Thess 5:17; Phil 4:6; 1 Tim 2:8
- 12) List the things Paul mentions we should pray for in his teaching and example in the following: Rom 10:1; Eph 6:18-20; Col 1:9-11.
- 13) What does Paul tell us will be the result of prayerfully committing all our needs to God (see Phil 4:7)?
- 14) Think of two Christian friends. Based on what you have learned from today's lesson, pray for their spiritual growth.
- 15) Sum up your key lessons on prayer.

ACTS Prayers

Adoration

God is:

- Creator
- Almighty
- All Knowing
- All Present
- Eternal
- Holy & Just
- Loving & Gracious

Confession

Forgive us for:

- Complacency
- Hypocrisy
- Laziness
- Known Sins
- Secret Sins

Thanksgiving

Thank You for:

- Salvation
- Grace & Mercy
- Provision
- Protection
- Family
- Beauty in Creation

Supplication

Pray for:

- Personal/Family Needs
- Fellow Believers
- Missionaries
- The Sick
- Leaders (Church/Nation)

Adoration of Jesus Christ

Alpha & Omega

Bright & Morning Star

Christ the Lord

Desire of all Nations

Eternal Life

Faithful & True

Good Shepherd

Head of the Church

Immanuel

Judge of All Mankind

King of Kings

Light of the World

Mighty God

New & Living Way

Only Begotten Son

Prince of Peace

Quencher of Thirst

Redeemer of Israel

Saviour of the World

Truth

Unchanging God

Vine

Way to the Father

Xpress Image of God

Yoke Breaker

Zion's Joy