



Why do we pray?

One of God's great plans for the church is to be a place of prayer. In Mark 11:17, Christ described the temple as a house of prayer for all nations. In the same way, believers are the temple of God both individually and corporately (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19). God created both the church and His followers to be characterized as a place and people of prayer.

"First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be offered on behalf of all people, even for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. Such prayer for all is good and welcomed before God our Savior since he wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one intermediary between God and humanity, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom for all, revealing God's purpose at his appointed time" (1 Timothy 2:1-7).

Only God can save man — that's the divine side of salvation. "Come to the knowledge of the truth" represents the human side. God doesn't save apart from the will of man. God works through man's will by providing faith to respond to the gospel (Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:12-13).

Why do we need to pray if God is sovereign? He knows everything and is over everything. Maybe because God originally made man to have dominion over all the earth. Man was meant to be God's agent to rule and build His kingdom. Although man fell, that remained God's method on the earth. God will not finish His work without man's prayer.

Ezekiel 22:30-31 says, "I looked for a man from among them who would repair the wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it, but I found no one. So I have poured my anger on them, and destroyed them with the fire of my fury. I hereby repay them for what they have done, declares the sovereign Lord."

God destroys nations, governments and individuals because of a lack of prayer. God is always looking for people who believe in Him to pray.

We must prioritize prayer. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "constantly pray" or "pray without ceasing." We must learn to pray at all times — when we are worried, angry, hungry, sleepy, resting and working. We develop this discipline by learning to bring every thought and activity to God. Prayer is important to God's Kingdom and to us. We must learn to pray at all times.



How do we pray?

ACTS

- A - Adoration**
- C - Confession**
- T - Thanksgiving**
- S - Supplication**

How do you begin your prayers with God? What do you normally say? Do you talk with God or at God? Are your prayers mostly made up of requests?

Our prayers often center around supplication, which means requesting God's help for something. This acrostic for prayer reminds us to first adore God and give thanks to Him before we immediately hop into all of our requests. This model helps ground us in the character and person of God, which can give us hope, comfort and confidence as we pray to Him for our "daily bread" and needs.

As we work through this acrostic, please note that Scripture references are tied to each of these points because ultimately, what is superior to learning this model of prayer is learning to pray Scripture. Reading God's Word and then speaking God's Word back to Him is one of the best ways to engage with God and learn to trust His promises. When we do not know what to pray for, His Word can jumpstart us and guide us to praying in accordance with His will!



Adoration

Adoration is praising and worshiping God. In adoring God we worship the triune God and His infinite perfections. This is a time to marvel that He is the creator and we are the creation.

Deuteronomy 10:17-18

“For the Lord, your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.”

Exodus 34:6-7

“The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.’”

2 Samuel 7:22

“Therefore you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.”

Psalms 8:1

“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.”

Psalms 18:30-31

“This God —his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God?”

2 Chronicles 20:6

“O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.”

Isaiah 46:9-10

“I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’”

Hebrews 1:3-4

“He [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”

Colossians 1:15-17

“He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

When we pray, we want to adore and praise God for who He is ... as Jesus prayed, “Our Father in heaven; Hallowed be your name; Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” These words of Christ in the Lord’s prayer capture a heart that recognizes and adores the greatness of God!



Confession

Confession naturally follows adoration because when we acknowledge the greatness of God, we see how woefully short we fall in obeying Him. Confession is acknowledging and mourning over our sin against God. We confess our rebellion and wickedness to Him.

Psalm 51:1-4

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight”

Romans 3:10-12

“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

Galatians 5:19-21

“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Colossians 3:5-10

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Matthew 11:28

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

These verses remind and show the depth of our sin. We can confess to the many sins we have committed against God as we have failed to love Him and love others. Jesus taught us to pray asking God to “forgive us our debts, as we forgive others.” We have to confess our transgressions knowing that God is not a distant God but rather beckons us to confess our sin and come to Him!



Thanksgiving

After we confess our sins to God, we can rejoice and be thankful that He fully forgives us because of Jesus Christ. We can thank God for the many blessings in our life, from our salvation to how He helps us every moment of every day.

1 Chronicles 16:34

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Philippians 4:6

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

Ephesians 1:3-7

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.”

Psalms 105:1-3

“Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!”

Ephesians 5:18-20

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

When we give thanks to God we worship Him for His goodness to us in saving and adopting us as sons and daughters. We also thank Him for giving us our daily bread because, if we take the time to reflect throughout the day, we will realize that everything we have received that day has come from God, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift.



Supplication

Supplication is where we ask God for our spiritual and physical needs. This is our time of making requests for God to provide for needs like a job or college admission. This is where we ask God to heal a loved one.

1. Ask for our physical needs.

- a. "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11)
- b. "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:31-33).

2. Ask for God to strengthen other believers.

- a. We want to ask God to help our friends at church and school to walk in a closer relationship with Him and love Him more deeply. Paul provides for us a perfect prayer to offer up for our believing friends from Colossians 1:9-14:
 - i. "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for {insert friend's name}, asking that {insert friend's name}, may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified {insert friend's name}, to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

3. Prayer for unbelievers

- a. Effective evangelism includes heartfelt prayer for the unsaved.
 - i. Jesus prayed for the lost in John 17:20, "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message."
- b. In Matthew 6:9-10, Jesus commands believers to pray for Christ's rule and reign ("Thy Kingdom come") to come in people's lives. The Apostle Paul models and encourages believers to pray for the lost (Romans 10:1-2; 1 Tim. 2:1-4).
 - i. Romans 10:1-2 shows Paul's heartfelt passion to see his fellow Israelites come to Christ when he says, "My heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation." His passionate praying came before his intentional sharing of the gospel (see verse 2).
 - ii. In 1 Timothy 2:1-4, Paul's words to young Timothy sets the priority of prayer on behalf of the lost when he says "First of all." His words also show the importance of such prayer in fulfilling the Great Commission in any nation (see verses 2-4).
- c. Psalm 126:4-6 teaches passionate prayer for the lost. It is not enough to share the good news: we must also pray that people might open their hearts to the gospel.



Prayer for Evangelism Efforts

In Acts 13:1-4, the early church prayed for and sent Barnabas and Paul on their mission to the Gentiles. The church recognized their dependence upon the power of God to fulfill their mission. In boldness, Paul and Barnabas went. This was largely due to the church's desire to trust God in prayer.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Paul requests prayer for his evangelistic team: "Finally brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified just as it did also with you." One reason Paul's ministry was so fruitful was because of the prayer support he often asked for and received from believers (see Eph. 6:18-20; 1 Thess. 5:25; Col. 4:12-13).

Prayer for Open Eyes

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul stated, "In their case, the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Only through God opening their eyes and minds to the gospel will the unsaved see and hear the good news of Jesus Christ. We need to pray for them and appeal to God for this to happen.

Intercessory prayer that is intentional and continuous can see God remove the scales of blindness over their eyes and help them to see themselves as God sees them: lost and in need of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Our God is sovereign and desires for all persons to come to Jesus Christ. He can engineer circumstances to help convince them that their number one need is spiritual, and the answer is found in Jesus Christ alone.

God wants all people to turn from living their own way, doing their own thing, and come to Him. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance."

Therefore, we need to pray that God will engineer circumstances in their life that will show them their deep and desperate need for Jesus Christ.



Pray for God to send someone to tell them about Jesus Christ.

As you pray for them to hear about Jesus Christ, be willing to tell them yourself. In fact, ask God for the open door to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them and others. You might be the "someone" that others are praying for to tell their friend or family member about Christ. Be faithful to ask God to use you to share Jesus with others.

GOD'S HEART

This pattern of prayer may help you pray evangelistically for others:

- G** = Pray believers, beginning with yourself, will appreciate **God's grace**. When we really appreciate what God has done for us, we naturally want to tell others about Him. That's why new believers are often most willing to do evangelism — their salvation is so fresh, they almost can't avoid telling the story. We stop evangelizing when we take grace for granted.
- O** = Pray for believers to live in **obedience** to God. We can't change another person's heart. Only God can do that. If we're not walking in obedience to God, our disobedience hinders our prayers (Isa. 59:1-2). Abiding in Christ really does matter when we pray (John 15:7).
- D** = Pray believers will **decide** to tell others. Evangelism doesn't just happen. Telling the story of Jesus is a choice, an action, a decision. Many believers know they should do evangelism but decide not to do it. Pray that won't happen.
- S** = Pray that believers will **speak** the gospel fearlessly and clearly. In fact, that's the way Paul taught us to pray in Ephesians 6:19-20 and Colossians 4:2-4. If Paul needed others praying for him to do evangelism, how much more do we need that kind of support?
- H** = Pray for nonbelievers to have a receptive **heart** to the gospel. Apart from Christ, all people are dead in their sin (Eph. 2:1), held under the devil's trap (Acts 26:18). Only God can make our hearts open to the good news.
- E** = Pray their spiritual **eyes** will be opened. Non-believers are blinded to the truth of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:3-4), and the "god of this age" does all he can to keep them in darkness. Nothing we do apart from the power of God can open their blinded minds.
- A** = Pray they will have God's **attitude** toward sin. We're all sinners (Rom. 3:23), and we must see our sin as God sees it — as wrong against a holy God.
- R** = Pray non-believers will **repent** and believe. The message of Christ is clear: we must turn from our sin and trust Christ for salvation (Mark 1:15). God gets the glory as He frees nonbelievers from their sin (Col. 1:13).
- T** = Pray their lives will be **transformed**. Only God can change a man. When God does that, the non-believing world takes note.

Find someone to pray for you to speak the gospel boldly and clearly. Are you praying for other believers to be evangelistic? Are you praying for non-believers? Are you asking God to save and transform a specific person?

Even if you've been praying for someone for many years, don't give up. God still responds to the prayers of His people. That's His heart.

