

Principles and Practice

Prayer, Part 1

☑ **Target:** *Get close to Jesus through prayer and praise!*

Key Verses

Matthew 7:7–8—Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

John 14:14—If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

Suggested Bible Reading

- Psalms of praise: Psalms 34, 100, and 103.
- Matthew chapters 1–4

Other Recommended Reading

- Prayer Power (Get Activated! book)*

Prayer and Praise: “Thank You, Jesus, for Making Things Turn Out Right!”

Jesus, I don’t always stop and thank You when things are going well. It seems like sometimes I only remember to do that when things turn bad.—Well, actually, not even right away when they turn bad, but often only after they’ve been bad and You’ve turned them good again. That’s not very nice of me, is it, Jesus? Please help me to have faith to praise You even when things don’t look so good, because I know that all things work together for good to them who love You (Romans 8:28).

I want to thank You for showing me that. And, before I forget, I’m going to say with my whole heart that I appreciate all the good things You do for me, the ones I see and the ones I don’t even notice. You make so many things turn out right, and I just love You more than ever.

Help me to tell You more and to love and praise You more often. Thanks a lot, Jesus. I really appreciate You!

Meditation : “God Is Still on the Throne and Prayer Changes Things!”

Many people seem to put the stories of Jesus and His disciples way back in the past. They’re looked on as fairy tales. They have no reality to them. God is far away, Heaven is far away, Jesus has long been dead, everything is so far away! But the Lord is just as real as ever and can still do the same, and even more so. God is still alive, well, and working just as powerfully as ever amongst those that trust in Him! He says in the Bible, “I am the Lord, I change not” (Malachi 3:6), and “Jesus Christ: the same yesterday, today and forever!” (Hebrews 13:8). The day of miracles is not past! God’s Word and His guarantees have no restrictions, no limitations, no qualifications except our faith.

All God asks of us is that we honor Him with faith, by believing the promises in His Word. When you pray, bring those promises with you to remind Him. When you remind God of His Word, it shows you have faith in it. It's a positive declaration of your faith and your knowledge of the Word that pleases God. So quote Scriptures and hold God to His Word!

"Keep on believing, God answers prayer!

Keep on believing, He's still up there!"

He has never failed in one of His good promises! (1 Kings 8:56).

<To think about> *Are you spending some time communing with the Lord in prayer each day? Are you asking for His help?*

Getting to Know the Bible: The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew is the first of the four Gospels.

Matthew was a Jewish man who collected taxes for the Romans. Tax collectors often cheated the people and so were not well liked; yet Jesus called Matthew to be one of His disciples. Matthew probably learned how to keep good records when he was a tax collector, and he must have kept good records of his life with Jesus. If you have a "red-letter edition" of the Bible (in which the Words of Jesus are in red), you will note that the Gospel of Matthew contains more direct quotations from Jesus than any of the other three Gospels. Over 60% of all the verses in Matthew contain direct quotations from Jesus.

Matthew recorded many of Jesus' sermons or teachings. The best known one is called "The Sermon on the Mount" (chapters 5 to 7). Other important chapters include:

Chapter 10: Sending forth the twelve disciples.

Chapter 13: Parables of the Kingdom.

Chapter 18: Lessons on humility, salvation, forgiveness, prayer.

Chapter 23: Woe to religious hypocrites.

Chapters 24 and 25: The Endtime and the Second Coming of Jesus.

Matthew repeatedly quoted the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah to show that Jesus fulfilled them and therefore He was indeed the promised Messiah. This makes the Gospel of Matthew a "bridge book," as it links the Old Testament and the New—prophecy and the fulfillment of prophecy.

12 Steps of Effective Prayer

- 1. Have a praiseful, thankful attitude. Please Him by praising Him!

Philippians 4:6—With thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

- 2. Start with a clean heart.

1 John 3:20–22—If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Psalms 32:5—I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

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.

Psalms 51:10—Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psalms 139:23—Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties;

- 3. Pray for God’s will to be done. The best way to know God’s will is to say I will to God.

Psalms 37:4—Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

1 John 5:14–15—Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (15) And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

- 4. Put the needs of others ahead of your own. Jesus, then others, then you spells J-O-Y!

1 Thessalonians 1:2—We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.

Psalms 31:1—Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

- 5. Be specific. Specific prayers get specific answers.

John 15:7—What would you have Me do for you?

- 6. Be wholehearted. It’s not how long you pray or how much you pray, it’s how much you believe.

Jeremiah 29:13—You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

- 7. Exercise your faith. When faith goes to market it always takes a basket.

Matthew 9:27–30—When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” (28) And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” (29) Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” (30) And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, “See that no one knows it.”

Matthew 13:58—Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

James 2:17–18,26—Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (18) But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ... (26) For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

- 8. Pray in the name of Jesus. There is power in the name of Jesus!

1 Timothy 2:5—For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

John 14:6—Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

John 14:13 – And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:14 – If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

John 16:23b – Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.

John 16:24 – Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

■ 9. Claim God’s Word. Quote Scripture when you pray. Hold God to His Promises.

2 Peter 1:4—There have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.

1 John 3:22—Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

■ 10. Refuse to doubt. When you pray—believe!

James 1:6–8—Ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. (7) For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; (8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Mark 11:24—Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

■ 11. Count it done. “Stand fast in the faith” (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Isaiah 65:24—It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.

■ 12. Thank God for answering. What we win by prayer we must wear with praise.

Verses to Claim When Praying

John 15:7—If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

Mark 9:23—Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”

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

Faith in Action: Testimonies of Answered Prayer

God’s Supply!

Pine Springs Ranch, a Christian summer camp, was running out of water. Two hundred young campers had used a lot of water. The tanks, supplied by a nearby mountain well, were not filling up. They were almost empty. If it did not rain very, very soon, the camp would have to close after a season of only two weeks. Those present at the family camp prayed earnestly for rain. The next day clouds gathered and a few drops fell—but not enough to change the situation at all.

Friday evening after campfire the campers gathered for prayer again. Why had not God answered their prayers? Should they be more specific? Should they set a time limit? Should they ask God to send rain by Monday morning? Would that be faith or presumption? They decided they should not tell God how to answer their prayers, but simply leave the matter in His hands. In that spirit they prayed.

As soon as they rose from their knees, some ran to check the tanks, as they had been doing every few hours. The others were saying good night to each other. Suddenly a shout rang out over the camp, “Water! There is water in the tanks!”

Now those last to leave the prayer circle raced to the tanks. Even as they ran, they could hear the sound of flowing water. Someone shouted, “The tanks are full and running over!”

Five hours earlier those tanks were empty. Now they were full and running over. Evidently rain is not the only way God can fill water tanks!

Surviving an Earthquake in Sakhalin! (island of eastern Russia)

Several survivors told us of miraculous escapes from their collapsing apartments. "I know there is a God," said one man, "because He answered my prayer and kept me alive by a miracle! After the first tremor I was stuck head down between two cement slabs. I felt at that instant that I would surely die. If the slabs shifted, I would be crushed, and if I had remained in that position for very long the mounting blood pressure in my brain would kill me. I prayed to God to save me, and with the second tremor I was thrown out of the building to safety."

Healing: Instant Answer to Prayer!

By Giovanni, Italy

In the Bible, rather than asking Jesus to come into his house, a Roman centurion had his friends tell Jesus, "Say the word and my servant will be healed" (Luke 7:2-10). This was an act of faith that Jesus' Word was as powerful as His physical presence.

We thought of this story when a visitor told us of a child he knew who had been in a coma for a long time. Very worried about this boy, he asked if we could pray for him. We gathered together and prayed, asking God for His healing power to touch the boy and restore his health. Later we heard that the same evening, a hundred miles away in Florence, the boy came out of the coma and is now doing fine! Prayer is powerful!

The Lord Proves His Existence!

From Micah and Cephas, North America

Cephas and I met a Cambodian girl who worked in a shop. We noticed that she walked with a limp. She then told us the testimony of how she'd escaped from Cambodia over 10 years ago during the Pol Pot regime. She escaped to one of the refugee camps in Thailand and there she was witnessed to by a Christian.

She said: "After I heard about God and Jesus I started to pray. I asked God to do different things to prove His existence and He answered every one of my prayers! I did this to see if God was real or not. Up until this point in my life, I was lame. I could only crawl. But I read in the Bible, 'The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them' (Matthew 11:5). So I said, 'God, if You are real, make me walk!' And He did! Then I prayed and received Jesus as my Savior!"

Most of her family was killed during the Pol Pot regime. Through her sufferings, she grew close to the Lord and learned to depend on Him.

Modern-Day Sleeping Beauty!

From Nathan and Ana, Europe

We met a lady who said her five-year-old daughter was sick, and even the best doctors did not know what the problem was. The little girl would fall asleep at any time, in any place, and she would sleep for hours and even days without waking up. This dear woman received Jesus as her Savior, and we prayed with her for her daughter. We told her that we'd also pray for her in our fellowship meeting. She showed great faith and trust in prayer, believing that the Lord could do a miracle.

A month later we visited her again and she told us, with tears in her eyes, that her little girl was healed! She was so happy and thankful! She is now sharing this testimony with others and giving God the glory!

The Doctors Had No Hope!

From Andrew and Mercy, Latin America

This month we spoke with a woman who was in the intensive care unit of a hospital. She had cancer and the doctors had given up hope. She was just waiting to die. When we witnessed to her, she eagerly received Jesus. Pablo asked her if she believed Jesus could heal her, and she said yes; so

they prayed fervently for her healing. Later, we went back to visit her and found her up and dressed, packing her suitcase! She looked up and smiled radiantly, saying, "I'm going home! Jesus healed me!" The Lord still does healing miracles today!

For Your Quiet Times: How to Pray with Powerful Results

From The Power in Praising God by Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892), English preacher

Do you lament that your prayers aren't answered? Have you given up going to God with your every concern because you aren't seeing results of your prayer time? Include these attitudes in your prayer life:

Pray confidently. If you begin by doubting, your prayer will falter. "According to your faith let it be to you," God tells us. When you are in a time of trouble, ask God for help, believing that He is able to give it. Ask, expecting that He will give it.

Remember God's faithfulness. Remember what He has done for you, then remember that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). If He was faithful then, He will be faithful now.

Rely on His promises. First, read Scriptures so that you know what those promises are, then grasp the mighty faithfulness of God with a grip of determination.

Admit your weakness. Set your case before God, laying bare all your sorrow and all your needs, then say, "Lord, there it is." Share your soul with Him. He is not moved by eloquence of words or oratory of tongue, but is swift to answer the true oratory of real distress. He loves for us to state the difficulty we are in. Then, when He gets us out of it, we may remember the sorry condition we were in, with gratitude and rejoicing.

Declare your trust. Express your confidence in God. Look to Him for your rescue, knowing that it will come. Your eyes may be filled with tears, but keep looking toward Him. As you look, your eyes will get stronger, and you will become enlightened with His wisdom and direction.

For Your Quiet Times: "I Thirst for You!"

Here is a translation of a writing from Mother Teresa. It is a prophecy from Jesus, given through Mother Teresa before she went to be with Him. Jesus is speaking to those who do not know Him well, and describing His love and yearning for each person.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock..." (Revelation 3:20). I stand at your heart's door, day and night. Yes, even if you doubt that it is Me, even if you don't heed, I am there. I wait for even the slightest sign of response, the quietest whisper of a prayer, that allows Me to come in.

I want you to know that whenever you invite Me, I always come. I come in, silent and unseen, but with unending strength and love, bringing many gifts of My Spirit. I come with My mercy, with the desire to forgive, with love which is above your understanding. As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you. I come yearning to calm you, give you strength, lift you up and bind up all your wounds. I bring you My light to drive away your darkness and all your doubts. I come with My strength so that I can carry all your burdens; with My mercy, to touch your heart and remake your life; with My peace, to bring quietness into your soul.

I know you through and through. I know everything about you. Each hair of your head is counted. There is nothing unimportant to Me about your life. All these years I have followed you, and even in your strayings I have always loved you. I know each of your problems, I know all your needs and wants, and yes, I also know all your sins. Still, I will repeat again that I love you, not because of what you have or haven't done, but because of you yourself, for the sake of the beauty and the value that My Father has given you, creating you in His Own likeness—that value that you so often forget about, that beauty that you have covered with sin. I love you as you are, and have poured out My blood to win you again.

I know what's in your heart. I know your loneliness, your pain and sense of loss, your condemnation and humiliations. I suffered all these before you did, and for your sake, so that you could share in My strength and overcoming. I know of your yearning for love, your thirst to be loved and pampered. How often you have thirsted in vain, selfishly looking for love, striving to fill the inner emptiness with temporary pleasures, or with an even greater darkness, that is brought by sin. Do you thirst for love? I will quench your thirst and fill you up. Are you thirsty for care and attention? I care for you, more that you can even imagine—even to the death of the cross for your sake.

I thirst for you. Yes, this is the only way that I can express to you My love. I thirst for you, thirst to love you and thirst after your love. You are very precious to Me. I thirst for you. Come to Me, and I will fill up your heart and heal your wounds. I will remake you into a new creation, and even in all your trials will I give you peace. I thirst for you. Never doubt My mercy, My desire and will to forgive, My yearning to bless you and live in you. I thirst for you. If in the world's eyes you are of little importance, that means nothing. In this world, I have no one more important than you. I thirst for you. Open up to Me, come to Me, thirst for Me. Give Me your life and I will show you how much you mean to My heart.

I see the place that My Father has prepared for you in My Kingdom. Remember that on this earth you are just a pilgrim, on his journey home. Sin will never satisfy you, will never bring the peace that you are looking for. All that you have sought for outside of Me has brought you even more darkness, therefore do not hold on to the things of this earth.

It doesn't matter how far you have strayed, it doesn't matter how often you have forgotten Me, it doesn't matter how many crosses you are able to carry, there is just one thing that you have to remember that's true, that will never change: I thirst for you, just as you are.

All your life I have been looking for your love. I never gave up looking for the chance to love you and to be loved by you. Trying to find happiness, you have tried many things; so why don't you try to open your heart to Me, now, in this moment? I stand at your heart's door and knock. Open to Me, for I thirst for you.

(Note from Mother Teresa:) Jesus is God, that's why His love, His thirst, is without end. He, the Creator of all, pleads for the love of His creation. He thirsts for our love. These words "I thirst," do not they echo in our souls?

12 STEPS of EFFECTIVE PRAYER

