

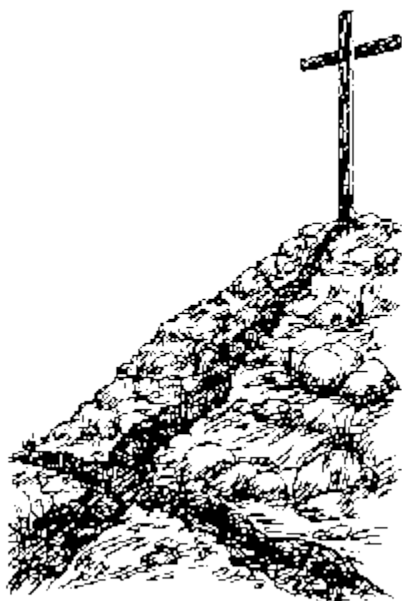
The Christian and Prayer

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What Is Prayer? Why Do We Pray?

Rock Hill Baptist Church

Brother David Buffaloe, Pastor

605 Rock Hill Road
Lexington, Tennessee 38351
731-845-6104
bibleteacher.org



Introduction

Why do we pray? Or better yet, why do **I** pray? Christianity has enjoyed a whole plethora of fads over the past few years. There was the “**Prayer of Jabez**” where, according to David Wilkerson, you could pray the simple prayer that the Old Testament saint Jabez prayed:

(1 Chronicles 4:9-10 KJV) " And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. { 10 } And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."

I read one of Wilkerson's books, which were so strictly copy written that I can only quote the Bible itself. Wilkerson taught that any Christian could faithfully pray this simple prayer and be blessed of God. **I know Wilkerson was blessed. At last count I found that he had around 14 different releases of the “Prayer of Jabez”**, each earning him royalty with each purchase made.

Next there was the “**Experiencing God**” craze that swept the churches, especially the Southern

Baptist churches I am acquainted with. Don't get me wrong - there are redeeming truths in both the "Jabez" and the "Experiencing God" books and series. But, as it is with most fads, the outward label is often deceptive. **Prayer cannot be reduced to some formula that you follow** and then, following some alchemist's fantastic recipe, you suddenly turn lead into gold. Let's turn away from the fads and turn toward the Bible.

What Is Prayer?

The word "pray" occurs 109 times in Scripture, "prayer" 110. People address the Creator as "my God" over 150 times in Scripture, as "my Lord" over 100 times. Only someone foolish would consider prayer to be of little consequence to the Godhead.

Prayer is communication with God. God expects us to pray - but our prayer is **more effective** out of a **surrendered** life. Anyone can approach God in prayer, but God will only hear the prayers of those who know Him and whom He knows.

Psalms 116:1-2 "I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

Prayer and Study of the Word of God, are two of the greatest disciplines in the Christian life. You **always saw Jesus doing** one of these two things - praying or going to the Temple to read or teach the Word. Prayer, just like Study of God's Word, is often the most NEGLECTED discipline in the Christian life. This should not be the case.

You see, from the very beginning **God created Adam with fellowship** in mind. Adam was not a "great experiment", but God's earnest desire to create a being that would willingly fellowship with Him. He created the **angels**, super beings that had access to His very throne room. They came in and out on a daily basis, and some even became arrogant enough to challenge His authority. Angels were superior to man in form and power, but **man had something that the angels never had - he was created in the image of God.**

The angels never pray to God, but man prays to God. God created a being that could, if he would, communicate with his Creator out of a **sense of love and duty**, who could build a relationship with the Eternal Majesty, who could love Him as He loved us. Sadly, we're often too concerned with ourselves to take the time to communicate with Our Father.

In my short life span I have seen prayer abused, misused, and ignored by believers. I have sat in services where the preacher prays, but as he prays he "preaches" to God. I have seen people write down prepared prayers so they would be "fulfilling" when said in the worship services of the Church, and watched in awe as people have rattled off meaningless and repetitive prayers ("Hail, Mary, Full of Grace ..." or "Our Father Who art in Heaven...") over and over again, as if emptiness repeated will bring a better blessing.

Prayer is none of these things. Prayer is communication, pure and simple, to the Father of all. Prayer is the communication that the lesser being (man) directs toward the greater Being (God), in faith that the greater Being (God) will answer. Prayer, quite simply, is TALKING TO GOD.

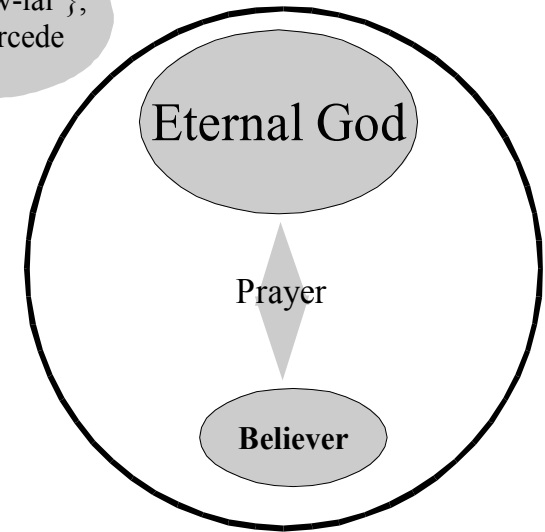
Effective prayer begins with a proper relationship with God. In fact, it is *impossible to effectively pray to God* unless you *first* have a relationship with God.

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(Numbers 21:6-9 KJV) "And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. {7} Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. {8} And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. {9} And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

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To Intercede

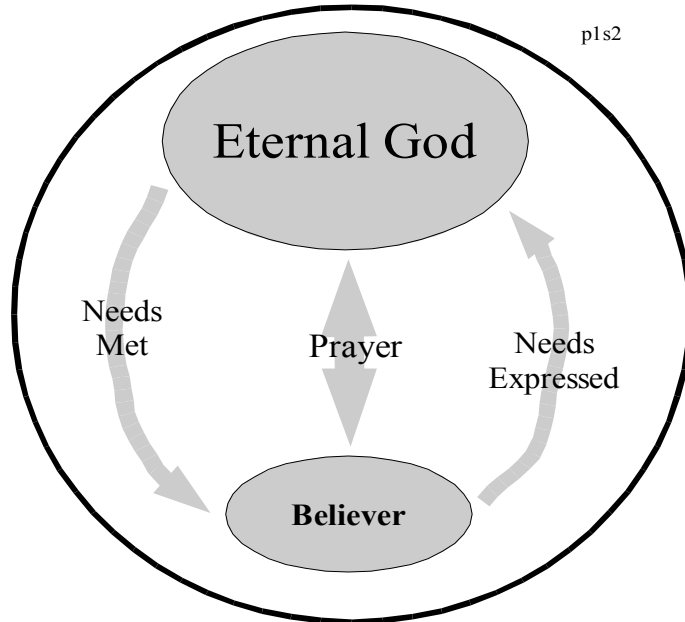


When Israel sinned against God and God punished them by bringing fiery (venomous) serpents into the camp, Israel went to Moses and asked that he pray for them. Prayer is neither *effective* nor *possible* unless you have a proper, Blood bought, Christian relationship with God.

Though we who believe are *repeatedly*

commanded to pray:

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You **must be a believer**, one of God's people, **or one seeking salvation through Christ** if you expect to hear your prayers answered. God says:

(2 Chronicles 7:14 KJV) "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

We **must be "my people"**, God's people. God **does not hear the prayer of those who are not in the Family** of God. If a person is actively wicked, not seeking a relationship with God by accepting

Jesus Christ as Savior, then God *ignores* his prayers:

(Proverbs 15:29 KJV) "The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."

However if a person accept Christ as Savior, if a person seeks to enter the Kingdom of God through the Blood and Cross of Christ, then God hears those prayers:

(Proverbs 8:17 KJV) "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."

(Jeremiah 29:13 KJV) "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

(John 7:37-38 KJV) "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. {38} He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

I am often shocked by the **casual way in which many people approach God and prayer**. A person repeatedly **rejects God's call** to salvation, makes light of the Cross of Christ, by their disobedience shows that they have little or no regard for God's Plan - and in general, lives their life without Christ or Creator. Then, when calamity strikes,

these same people want to pray. They want God to answer their every prayer, to relieve them of their affliction because they prayed. Is this good sense? God says:

(Proverbs 1:24-31 KJV) "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; { 25 } But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: { 26 } I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; { 27 } When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. { 28 } Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: { 29 } For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: { 30 } They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. { 31 } Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

There are many times, *many times* when God will not answer prayer because those who pray have **no proper Blood bought relationship** with God.

Prayer is therefore a **petition that we make to our Creator either for ourselves or for someone else**. Prayer is only heard by God if the petitioner is *seeking salvation* or is *already saved* and seeking God's intervention for himself or for someone else.

How Should I Talk To God?

Mark 11:24 "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

Matthew 18:19-20 "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

When I was a young boy I often asked my daddy for things. When we were growing up, life was hard. Dad only made about 20.00\$ a week, and we had to be very careful that there was enough money for the necessities. I didn't understand that then, but I do now. Anyway, I'd ask Dad for things, and sometimes he'd say "yes", other times "no", and sometimes it was "let me think about it". I remember when I entered High School I wanted to join the band, but in order to join you had to purchase your instrument. Dad said "no", and I was heartbroken. But in time I got over it! Dad is unlimited in his love, but was limited in his resources, and this was the reason I didn't often get what I wanted.

God our Father, on the other hand, has unlimited

resources. Look what Jesus said: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them". God is not limited by resources, but He is often limited by our relationship to Him.

Look, God is your Heavenly Father, and He is also the best Friend you'll ever have. He expects you to build a relationship with Him through prayer and study of His Word. As your relationship grows, your spirituality grows, and your ability to be blessed grows. **If you pray DISbelieving**, you are wasting your (and God's) time. Pray believing that He loves you, pray believing that He will only answer if it is in your best interest, pray establishing a relationship with Him. Then your prayers will be effective.

Jeremiah 33:3 "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

Isaiah 65:24 "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

Call on God expecting to receive a blessing, and expecting Him to answer in a mighty way. When you build a habit of prayer, a habit of seeking God's face, then His presence becomes more powerful as time goes by.

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Prayer is the cry of the Child to the Father, demanding sustenance as his right. Jesus said:

(Matthew 7:7-11 KJV) "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: {8} For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. {9} Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? {10} Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? {11} If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

Prayer is the means by which the child of God talks to his or her Father in Heaven.

Prayer And The Word of God

In a recent study we emphasized that the Word of God, the **Holy Scriptures, are the very breath** of

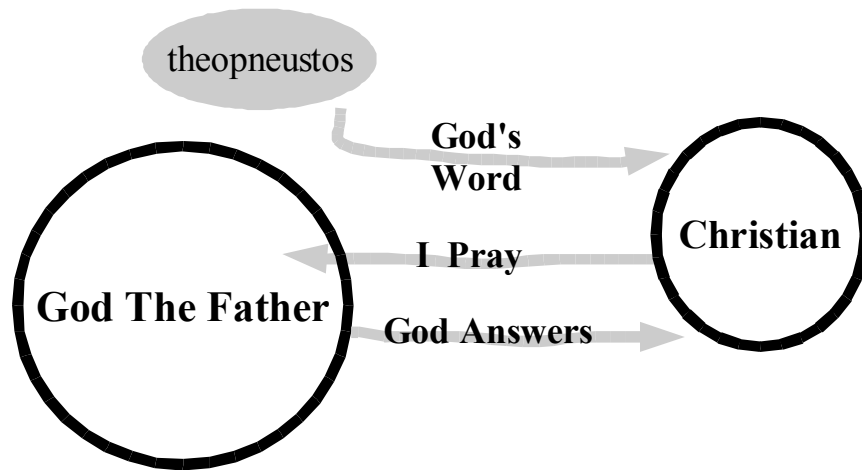
(2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV) "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: {17} That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

theopneustos

God. We looked at this 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and at the unique use of the Greek *theopneustos* in this

text. **God's Word is the oxygen of the Christian life, the breath of the Christian life.** Let's illustrate this. Put your **hand in front of your face.** Now say the word "Father". What do you feel? Now say the word "pray". What do you feel? If your hand is in front of your face you will feel the breath of your lungs against your hand.

Christians must understand that **effective prayer is related to an effective relationship with God.** The Scripture, ALL Scripture, is God Breathed. Being God Breathed the Scripture is essential in every facet of our lives - and especially in prayer.



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When we pray, we effectively pray when we do so *according to the Word of God.* **David** prayed:

(Psalms 119:170 KJV) "Let my supplication come before

thee: deliver me according to thy word."

Our prayers are *sanctified, separated unto God, and holy* when we pray according to the Word of God. **Jesus** said:

(John 17:17 KJV) "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

The Christian who **prays according to the Word of God is the Christian who enjoys answered prayer.** The **Bible guides our prayers** so that we do not pray foolishly. Knowledge of the Word of God *increases our maturity level* as believers, which in turn improves our prayer life.

If you feel that your prayers are getting no higher than the ceiling then ask yourself - am I reading and studying the Word of God on a regular basis? Are **my prayers according to His Word?** Listen Beloved. **David** was a "man after God's own heart":

(Acts 13:22 KJV) "And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will."

Notice how many times he referred to the Word of

God in his prayers to God:



Psalms 119:41, Salvation according to Thy Word

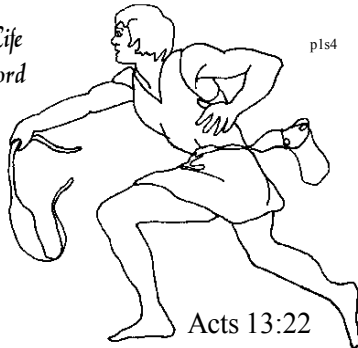
Psalms 119:76, Comfort according to Thy Word

Psalms 119:58, Mercy according to Thy Word

Psalms 119:169, Understanding according to Thy Word

Psalms 119:154, Life according to Thy Word

Psalms 119:170, Deliverance according to Thy Word



(Psalms 119:41 KJV) "WATU. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word."

(Psalms 119:58 KJV) "I entreated thy favor with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word."

(Psalms 119:76 KJV) "Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy

servant."

(Psalms 119:154 KJV) "Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word."

(Psalms 119:169 KJV) "WATU. Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word."

(Psalms 119:170 KJV) "Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word."

Here are the **twin powers in the Christian walk, Prayer and the Word of God.** The Word of God *blesses* those who hear it and *guard* it.

(Luke 11:28 KJV) "But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

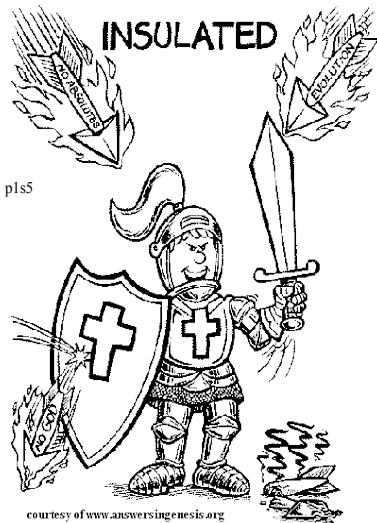
Man may set himself up under his own power, and we may see that person exalted for a time. Yet God is not mocked. A **Church cannot build apart from the applied Word of God.** A Christian cannot effectively **pray apart from the applied Word of God.** The Word of God *cannot help but grow*, for it is life.

When we are given the popular and often preached image of the Christian's armor, we see

the importance of the Word of God in prayer:

(Ephesians 6:13-18 KJV)

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. {14} Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; {15} And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; {16} Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. {17} And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: {18} Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"



I want you to notice the *order* of the *armor* the Christian is to put on. Our *loins* are covered with **Truth** (Thy Word is Truth - see **John 17:17**). Our *breastplate* or chest armor is **Righteousness** (be found in him, not having mine own righteousness - see **Philippians 3:9**). Our feet are covered with

the **Gospel** of Peace (How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace - see **Romans 10:15**). The shield of **Faith** (and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith - see **1 John 5:4**) is there to protect us, and the helmet of **Salvation** (of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth - see **Romans 1:16**). To finish off this armor the Christian takes the **Word** of God, the Sword of the Spirit. Now listen, Beloved! **Once the Christian is suited up in this armor what does he do?** Look at verse 18:

(Ephesians 6:18 KJV) "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

What's that again? Do we have special music, then pray? Do we follow some fad, some "Prayer of Jabez", some "Experiencing God" and then pray? No Beloved. We put on the FULL armor of God, then once *fully armored* we pray. That is the correct order. **That is God's order** - His Truth, His Righteousness, His Gospel, His Faith, His Salvation, His Word and following all these things, all this armor, THEN WE PRAY.

By the Word of His mouth God created all things. Power was in the prayers of the prophets of old

because they heard God's Word and, believing it, PREACHED and PRAYED that Word. The Word of God effectually works in those who believe:

(1 Thessalonians 2:13 KJV) "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

The Word of God guides us as we pray, helping us to pray correctly.

In our next booklet we will study the why God's Word MUST be magnified. We will study prayer and behavior that glorifies Jesus Christ our Savior - and discuss why many Christians experience *unanswered prayer*. God Bless!