

Prayer Study

Intro: All answered prayer begins in God. God calls His children to pray. He is the great Initiator. Prayer serves God's purposes before it serves man's. The prayers in Scripture record men and women who recognized God taking the initiative in their lives and sought God's mind and perspective concerning His directions for their lives.

When men and women in the Bible presented a request to God, they also usually presented a basis for asking. The basis for asking for something of God always reflected God's purposes. When people were led to pray, they give God a reason for granting the request. It's almost like these people heard God saying, "*Ok, I hear what you are praying but why should I grant this request?*" To do this, they had to approach prayer by seeking God's perspective on the situation. They wanted to pray for what God wanted to do then they gave God a reason to grant their request. Every time you approach God in prayer, you should keep God's perspective in mind and then ask accordingly and give Him a reason to grant the request. The reason is given not because God needs reminding but because it further reinforces our relationship with God. It strengthens in our mind who God really is and how He acts in the world.

There are four reasons given in Scripture given as the basis for God answering a prayer:

- a. The prayer acknowledges God
- b. The prayer is supported by the intercession of Jesus and because of His priesthood
- c. The prayer is supported by the intercession of the Holy Spirit
- d. The prayer comes from one who is related to God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

I. Acknowledging God (*recognize, avow, disclose, agree with, or proclaim*)

A. God answers prayers when the prayer takes into account who God is. When we recognize who God is in prayer, we are showing proper reverence for Him. There are four areas in Scripture where we see those praying acknowledging God.

1. His honor (*good name, reputation, integrity*)
2. His character (*traits, qualities, main or essential nature*)
3. His glory (*something that secures worshipful praise, magnificence, great beauty or splendor, the outshining of God's attributes*)
4. His sovereignty (*supreme excellence, power, rule, authority*)

B. Some prayers in the Bible concerned God's honor. Those who offered these prayers wanted to protect God's reputation and integrity. God's name is linked to His honor. In our prayers we seek to maintain God's reputation.

1. Ezra was a scribe while God's children were in exile in Babylon. Ezra asked king Artaxerxes for permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. The king gave his permission. Ezra was concerned about the safety of the people while they were carrying such a large sum of gold and silver for the Temple.

a. **Ezra 8:21-23**

How was God's honor involved in this request?

Why would God want to grant Ezra's request?

(Why do you think Ezra didn't want to ask the king for troops to protect them?)

b. **Ezra 8:31-32** - The answer to the people's prayer. God answered this prayer because

it was offered in order to protect His reputation as being the One who protects those who seek after Him.

2. Moses. After the faithless spies gave their report, God threatened to kill all the Israelites and make Moses a great nation. Moses prayed on behalf of God's honor.

a. **Numbers 14:15-16**

b. In Moses' prayer, what fear did he harbor concerning God's reputation if the prayer was not answered?

C. Some prayers in the Bible were based on the character of God. The character of God is who He is at His core.

a. This follows the passage we just read. It's part of the same prayer. **Numbers 14:17-19**. In this section of the prayer, Moses identified several qualities of God's character and asked God to respond according to those qualities. He believed that God's power would be magnified in the eyes of the people when they experienced these qualities of God.

Looking back at that passage, what are three qualities of God that Moses appeals to?

As you read through the Bible, it is good to keep a journal of your reading and what God is teaching you. One of the things to note in that journal is a section for listing the qualities of God that He reveals in Scripture.

b. Nehemiah heard of the tragic condition of his Jewish kinsmen in Jerusalem. When he heard that the walls had been broken down he prayed to God on and based his prayer on some of the characteristics of God.

1. **Nehemiah 1:5-6**

2. What are the qualities of God that Nehemiah acknowledged? (*heavenly, great, terrible or awesome, the keeper of the covenant or promise*)

c. Hannah was the mother of Samuel. When she prayed for a son, she included several qualities of God in her prayer.

1. **I Samuel 2:2**

2. What are the qualities of God Hannah acknowledged? (*holiness, uniqueness, knowledge or wisdom*)

Action Points

1. Reflect on the integrity of God's character. Has any perfection of His ever been diminished or blemished? If not, then He is worthy of all praise and honor as His integrity has always been maintained by Him.

2. Ask the Spirit to guide you to notice any places in your life where in the experience of your life you are not acknowledging God's character and integrity He has placed within you.

3. Before praying, ask yourself why should God honor or grant any of these requests? Has God revealed His perspective on this request and if so what is it? What quality would God demonstrate if He were to grant such a request? Acknowledge that quality of God as the basis for your request.

D. Prayer can be based on the glory of God. God's glory is the outshining of His attributes and activities. Glory is something that secures worshipful praise, magnificence or great beauty. God is not like any other and such His attributes and activities set Him apart from all

others. We dare not give the glory of the Lord to another or take it for ourselves. **Isaiah 42:8** - *“I am the Lord: that is My name. My glory I will not give to another.”*

1. Gideon - The Lord required Gideon to reduce his army's size from 32,000 men to 300 men so that the glory of the victory would not go to man but to God. (Judges 7:1-25)

2. David - He took a census of Israel out of pride. He was glorying in his own strength. As a result God demanded of him a choice of punishments (II Samuel 24:10-17).

3. Daniel - He was always careful to assign God the glory whenever the Lord gave him insight and wisdom before the king. **[Daniel 2:28, 2:47]**

4. Simon Peter - After he healed the man at the Temple gate pointed out that the glory for the healing went to God. **[Acts 3:11-13]** How did Peter turn the attention away from himself and to Jesus?

5. God's standards are very strict concerning His glory.

6. Based on your knowledge of the Bible and of God, what would be your definition of glory?

7. Look at an instance where someone attempted to take God's glory for himself. **[Acts 12:21-23]**

8. Look at an instance when someone was being compelled to take God's glory but rightly refused. **[Acts 14:8-18]**

9. We acknowledge God's glory when we worship Him for who He is and what He has done. We acknowledge God's glory when we tell others of Him. We rob God of His glory when we take credit for something He did.

10. What has God done in your life lately that reflects God's glory? Did you properly give God the glory?

11. How can we incorporate God's glory into our prayer lives?

E. God's sovereignty is another basis for our prayers. God's sovereignty means His supreme power and authority over all else, His rank above all others.

1. Sennacherib was gathering his army against Hezekiah, king of Judah. Let's read Hezekiah's prayer before the immanent attack fell. **[II Kings 19:15-19]**

a. How did Hezekiah acknowledge God's sovereignty?

b. Read the Lord's response to Hezekiah's prayer **[II Kings 19:20,32-37]**

2. **[Matthew 8:5-13]** - How did the Centurion express his faith in Jesus' sovereignty? What were the result of the Centurion expressing faith in Jesus' authority?

3. David recognized the uncontested imperial rank of God in his prayer over the offerings of the people for the Temple. **[I Chronicles 29:11-12]**

4. Use your imagination. Imagine you are in a enormous throne room of the highest monarch who ever lived - the King Jesus. Picture the respect and awe of on the faces of those people in His presence. Before approaching the King with your request, you are confronted by an royal court attendant who briefs you in the strictest protocol in approaching the King of Kings. Think through the titles for this King and choose those which best describe the King you are about to approach and then approach Him. As you draw near to Him, you see Him surrounded by angels and wonderful beings ready to execute any order He might give at any time. You see His regal robes and the multi-tiered crown upon His head in stunning beauty and splendor. Which attributes of God are most meaningful to you at this moment? Thank Him for showing you His glory and worship Him in adoration of His sovereignty.

5. Throughout this next week consciously seek opportunities to credit God with the activities He does in, through, and around you. Also, open your heart and eyes to God's sovereignty being displayed around you. In what ways has He shown His authority?

II. The prayer is supported by the priesthood of Jesus.

Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are our intercessors. When we pray it is important to understand that we can do so with the full assurance that the prayers we are praying under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are being presented by Jesus to the Heavenly Father for answering. The entire Trinity is involved with our prayer life. This is yet another reason God answers our prayers.

Definitions:

1) Intercede: To seek to reconcile differences between two parties; to mediate, to pray to God for another

2) Intercession: Prayer in the interest of or as a representative of another.

A. In all religions a priest is someone who has a special, direct access to deity. The high priest in Judaism was especially important as he had duties that no other priest or person could perform. He alone was allowed into the holy of holies, the inner most room of the Temple where God dwelt. Throughout the Old Testament, the priesthood was crucial to the Old Covenant as these were the men God chose to minister to Him and to the people.

B. Under the New Covenant, things changed. [**Hebrews 4:14-16**]

1. Who is the new high priest? (Jesus)

2. Where is He located? (in heaven)

3. How is He like the people He represents? (He has been tempted as we have)

4. How does He differ from His people? (He never sinned)

5. For what purpose do we approach the throne of God and our High Priest? (to receive mercy and grace)

6. What is our attitude to be when approaching this throne? (confidence)

7. [**Hebrews 10:21-22**] What has Jesus done for us to make this confident approach to God possible?

8. When presenting our requests, remember that Jesus is representing us and as the Father's only Son and as our sinless Savior, we don't have to be timid in presenting our requests.

C. Jesus intercedes for you

1. You never pray alone but with the intercession of Jesus your High Priest. Who would be a better intercessor than Jesus? There are two New Testament writers who mention Jesus and His praying.

a. Paul - [**Romans 8:34**]

b. Paul - [**Hebrews 7:25**]

c. Paul - [**Hebrews 9:24**]

d. John - [**I John 2:1**]

2. Jesus is praying on your behalf. Keep that in mind when you are praying - you are not alone during times of prayer.

III. The Holy Spirit intercedes for you

A. Because the Holy Spirit also intercedes for us we cannot plead ignorance or weakness when we pray. [**Romans 8:26-7**]

B. The Holy Spirit is both Teacher and Revealer to help you know and understand God's will. [**John 14:16, 25-6; 16:12-15**] What are the roles of the Holy Spirit in these passages?

C. The Holy Spirit indwells you and is your advocate on the earth front while Jesus is in heaven and is your advocate in heaven.

1. They both together are faultlessly interceding and pleading for you.

2. [**Acts 7:54-60**] - Besides an angry mob on earth, who else was aware of Stephen's plight and who else was Stephen's advocate?

3. Make a statement of praise or petition or thanksgiving to God. Now picture the Holy Spirit and Jesus making that same statement along with you.

D. For application.

1. Boldness in prayer

2. If the prayer is not one Jesus would make, then it isn't one we should be making.

IV. Our relationships to God and their shaping of our prayers

I. The Father - Child relationship

A. God answers prayers because of who we are in relation to Him. (Again, this make all prayer God-centered.)

1. When we get a call from a telemarketer, we usually don't pick up the phone or if we do, we certainly don't stay on the line any longer than we have to in order to politely get off the line.

2. However, when the phone rings and it is a child calling, then its time to pick up the phone. The relationship makes the difference in our attitude towards whose on the other end of the phone.

3. After the resurrection Jesus mentioned this relationship of God being the Father of believers to Mary Magdelene. [**John 20:17**]

4. Jesus instructed us to pray to God as Father in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9)

5. This relationship as a child of God should influence the way we pray and to help us know God listens to us because we are His children.

B. [**Romans 8:14-17**] - What are the words or phrases that indicate your family relationship to God the Father? (*sons of God, adoption, Abba, Father, children of God, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ*)

1. What are some of the characteristics of the father - child relationship?

2. Sons and daughters trust their father. Trust is an important element in healthy family relationships. Scripturally, trust is a basis for prayer.

a. The sons of Reuben, Gad, and Manassah were facing the Hagrites in battle and they prayed to God. Read why God answered their prayer. [**I Chronicles 5:20**] (trust in God)

b. [**Luke 11:1-13**] - What are some of Jesus' instructions concerning prayer?

c. In what ways is God like a human father, in regards to answering prayers?

d. In what ways is God unlike a human father, in regards to answering prayers?

II. The Friend of Jesus relationship

A. Once we come to know Jesus, He calls us His friend. **[John 15:12-17]**

1. What are some of the characteristics of friends? (*mutual liking of each other, loyalty, have each others backs, supports us and we support them, etc.*)

2. **[James 2:23, James 4:4]**

3. How do we grow in our friendship with Jesus over time? (*spending time and sharing experiences, good and bad, with them, etc.*)

II. The Master - Servant relationship

A. We can also pray on the basis of being one of God's servants.

1. Elijah was one of the outwardly mightiest prayer warriors of all time.

a. On Mt. Carmel, to demonstrate to a wavering nation who God really was, he engaged the evil queen and her 450 prophets of Baal in a dual to discern who was really God. When fire fell from heaven and consumed Elijah's offering after he prayed the nation saw clearly that the Lord was God and not Baal.

b. **[I Kings 18:36]** - On what basis did Elijah base his prayer? (*he was a servant of God*)

2. **[II Kings 19:34]** - On what basis did God say He was going to deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrians? (*fact that David was His servant*)

3. **[I Kings 8:59-60]** - What are some of the things Solomon is requesting in this prayer of the Temple dedication? (*one is to maintain the cause of God's servant*)

4. Jesus is called God's Servant, the Righteous One (Isaiah 53:11). It is impossible to separate the cause of God from His servants. If we are God's servants, it is His work that is touched by our prayers. As His work is important to Him, His interest in our prayers remains.

5. In Romans 1:1 Paul called himself a servant of the Lord. In James 1:1 James called himself a servant of the Lord. In II Peter 1:1 Peter calls himself a servant of the Lord. In Jude 1 Jude called himself a servant of the Lord. In Revelation 1:1 John called himself a servant of the Lord. **[I Timothy 4:1-8]**

6. How can a Christian be a child of God, a friend of God and a servant of God at the same time? (*Each term expresses a different truth of our relationship to the Lord. All are accurate and apply they just represent a different perspective of our identity in Christ. As the child, love and dependence is accented. As the friend, joy and companionship are accented. Whiled as the servant, kingdom work and loyalty are accented.*)

7. Which relationship do you most often project yourself into during your prayers?

8. Think of a prayer where each of these roles would be appropriate to use in approaching God.