

How To Pray

One of the major problems we as disciples encounter in our prayer lives is what to pray for. After praying for family, friends, needs, etc., in five minutes or less we run out of subject matter, and our prayer time has not been a real spiritual experience. The real problem is not a lack of things to pray about but a lack of understanding the elements of prayer. There are six elements of prayer every disciple of Jesus Christ should use at one time or another: Confession, Adoration, Thanksgiving, Intercession, Petition, and Meditation.

I. Confession

The first order of business in prayer should always be confession. Many Christians rush into God's presence asking, when they should be confessing.

Why is it important that confession be first (Psalm 66:18)?

Receiving God's forgiveness and His salvation occurs when we accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. At that point our eternal relationship with God is established. That relationship will never change, but our fellowship with Him can be broken. Prayer is the only way our fellowship with God can be maintained or restored if it has been broken.

Regardless of the severity or longevity of our sins, the promise of 1 John 1:9 is: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The word confess ("to agree with") simply means we admit to God we have done wrong and we are truly sorry. Confession is designed to maintain our fellowship with God. Read the following scriptures, and list the consequences of neglecting confession:

Psalm 51:12 _____

Psalm 51:8 _____

Psalm 32:3-4 _____

According to the following, what are the benefits of confession?

Psalm 32:1-2 _____

Psalm 51:13 _____

Psalm 51:14-15 _____

Confession based upon true repentance will result in a changed disposition, attitude, and actions. Some of the greatest spiritual victories in a Christian's life come as a result of honest confession. That is the reason Satan will work overtime to keep you from confessing your sins.

After a time of confession, the next logical step in prayer is to praise God for who He is, or ...

II. Adoration

Adoration should be one of the most important parts of prayer, but unfortunately, it is one of the most neglected. In adoration, you express your deep feelings toward God in response to knowing His attributes, many of which were studied in a previous lesson. One of the added benefits of adoration is that it makes us keenly aware of to whom we are talking, giving us confidence with the rest of our prayer.

Find the references below, and list some of the attributes for which God should be praised:

Psalm 104:1 & Psalm 145:3 _____ (Two)

Psalm 104:24 _____

Isaiah 6:3 & 1 Peter 1:14–16 _____ (One)

Psalm 31:19 & 33:5 _____ (one)

Jeremiah 31:3 & John 3:16 _____ (One)

While we should praise God for who He is, we should also express gratitude to Him for what He has done, which is called ...

III. Thanksgiving

Most of us spend too much time asking and too little time thanking God for what He has already done. If our hearts are right in our prayer time, we will often be overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude.

As you begin to grow in your prayer life, seek to express your deepest feelings concerning your gratitude toward God. A good place to begin is by thanking Him for the things in life we all take for granted—families, jobs, homes, special people in our lives, material blessings, good health, answered prayer, adversities from which we have spiritually grown, etc.

Read Psalm 103:1–5, and list three specific things for which every believer should be thankful:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

After confessing, praising, and being thankful in our prayer time, we come to ...

IV. Intercession

Intercession is simply praying for the needs of others. It is not begging God but rather praying with boldness and assurance. We should never ask God, or anyone else, to do for someone what we can do ourselves. Therefore, the intercessory part of our prayer life will usually *focus on the spiritual needs of other Christians*. The best place to find out about intercessory prayer is Ephesians 1:15–19. Read the passage, and list three things the apostle Paul prayed for the believers at Ephesus:

1. _____
2. _____ (Two)
3. _____

Another example of intercessory prayer is Christ’s high priestly prayer in John 17.

Sometimes it is nice to write a note to people for whom you have prayed. *Intercessory prayer is always concerned with the needs of others*. It is unselfish and seeks to meet the needs of others, even at the expense of personal sacrifice.

Thus far, we have considered intercessory prayer only because it relates to the needs of those who are already Christians. Now, we must examine another critical part of intercession—praying for the unsaved. There are two things we must recognize if we are to successfully pray for the unsaved. Read 2 Corinthians 4:3–4 and 2 Timothy 2:26, and explain:

1. _____
2. _____

Knowing these two spiritual truths we can pray intelligently for the lost. A lost person is not what he or she wants to be. They are what they must be because they are in spiritual bondage and aren’t even aware of it. With this in mind, for what should we specifically pray in reference to the lost? (There are two specific things to pray for here)

Then, we should pray, “Lord, I’m available to do what I can to win them.” After confession, adoration, thanksgiving, and intercession comes the next element of prayer ...

V. Petition

Petition is simply asking God to meet certain needs in our own lives. Though some disciples never progress beyond the “gimme” stage, there is nothing wrong with asking God to meet our needs. In fact, Jesus encouraged us to do just that in the Model Prayer when He said to ask our Heavenly Father for daily bread and deliverance from evil.

According to 1 John 5:14–15, what is the limitation God puts on answering our petitions?

Also, we must be careful not to confuse our needs with our wants, and we must be prepared to praise Him for a “yes,” “no,” or “wait” when He answers our petitions, because He will always give us the answer that is best in His eternal plan.

After a time of petition we should always take time for ...

VI. Meditation (or Listening)

Up to this point we have been doing all the talking in our prayer. Now it is time to listen to what God has to say to us. This element of prayer is last because until we have exhausted ourselves of what we want to say, meditation will be rushed, and we will not listen carefully to God. At the end of your prayer time you might simply say, “God, speak to me.” Do not try to confine Him to any specific area or subject. Just be open to anything the Lord may have to say, and LISTEN!

Prayers usually end with amen, which is a Hebrew word that has been transliterated into Greek, English, Latin, and German. It is probably the most universal word in the world. What does amen mean?

MEMORY VERSE: 1 John 1:9
