



What Should I Pray About?

DISCOVERING GOD'S WORD BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Q&A NUMBER: 66

www.GodSaidSo.com/QA66

What should I pray about? God's people should pray to God because it is the opportunity God has given for us to communicate with Him. This can be seen in all of the examples of prayer in the Bible. Prayer was the line of communication with God for Hannah, David, Nehemiah, Jesus, Paul, etc. Therefore, we need to consider the tremendous opportunity we have been given to pray because it is the avenue God has provided for us to communicate with Him.

God Hears The Prayers Of The Righteous

There is a special opportunity in prayer that has been given to those who are God's people. Any person living in this world could choose at any time to pray to God. But, the Scriptures clearly speak of the blessing prayer is for those who are righteous (right with God).

In Isaiah 1, God told His people in Judah who were engaged in wickedness, "When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood" (verse 15). God is clearly not pleased whenever individuals come to Him in prayer while they have sin in their lives that they are unwilling to repent of. There is, in fact, nowhere in the Scriptures that God has promised to hear (listen) to the prayers of those who are uninterested in doing His will.

In John chapter 9, Jesus healed a man who had been blind from the time of his birth. Whenever this man and his parents were being questioned in the later part of this chapter by the Jewish leaders, the man stated, "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him" (John 9:31). This man is, likely, drawing his conclusion from the many teachings in the Old Testament (similar to the passage in Isaiah 1) that demonstrates this truth (see Deuteronomy 1:45; Deuteronomy 3:26; Psalm 18:41; Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 15:29).

This same principle is taught in the New Testament (through a quotation from Psalm 34:12-16). 1 Peter 3:12 says, "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to

their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” While this passage, admittedly, stops just short of directly stating that God refuses to hear the prayers of those who are engaged in wickedness, it does present a clear contrast between the righteous and the wicked. Notice that it is only those who are righteous who are promised to have their prayers heard by God.

Then, James 5:16 says, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” No such promise is ever made to the ones engaged in wickedness. It is only those who are righteous whose prayers are promised to be powerful (as demonstrated by Elijah in verses 17 and 18).

Now, before moving on to consider what it is that we have been given the opportunity to communicate with God in prayer, let’s pause to fully appreciate this great blessing. For, it is not as if we are communicating with a god made of gold, silver, stone, wood, etc. who is unable to accomplish anything. And, it is not even that we are communicating with a god who has some ability to influence the outcome of some things. Instead, He is the God who is all-powerful. Therefore, we must appreciate the tremendous opportunity that prayer presents and make sure that we are not missing out on this opportunity to communicate with the God who is able to do more than we could ever ask or think!

What We Can Communicate In Prayer

Having a better appreciation that the God of this universe has promised to hear the prayers of those who are righteous, we need to consider what exactly we have been given the opportunity to communicate to God. Generally speaking, we have been given the opportunity to pray about anything and everything that we can think about, that we are thankful for, that we are sorry for, that we are worried about, etc. Consider the following as examples of what we can communicate to God in prayer.

(1) Through prayer, we can praise God. Whenever Jesus taught people to pray, He began, “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name” (Matthew 6:9). This simple beginning to Jesus’ model prayer demonstrates the importance of praising God through prayer. In saying “Hallowed be Your name,” Jesus was praising the Father’s name as being separated from all others. King David also provides many wonderful examples of praising God through the avenue of prayer. For instance, the book of Psalms is filled with psalms of praise to God – praise for His faithfulness, for His wondrous works, for His goodness, for His severity against His enemies, etc. Also read 1 Chronicles 29:10-13 to see an example of David praising God in prayer before all the assembly – before he prays concerning anything else.

Isn’t it wonderful that we have the opportunity to communicate our praise to God through the avenue of prayer! Whenever we see all the wondrous works of God in creation, we can stop and praise Him. Whenever we experience His goodness, we can stop and praise Him. Whenever we consider His love, we stop and praise Him. Yes, we can and should be diligent in communicating our praise to God in prayer!

(2) Through prayer, we can thank God. God has provided great blessings to those who are His people. This includes the necessary provisions to sustain life on this earth and the spiritual blessings that are only given to those who are in Christ Jesus. Certainly, the Scriptures teach that we ought to possess a thankful attitude toward all of these good things God has given to us. And, the Scriptures teach us that we communicate this thanks to God by means of prayer. Colossians 4:2 says, “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 says, “pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Isn't it wonderful that we have the opportunity to communicate our thankfulness to God through the avenue of prayer! Whenever we consider the place God has provided us to live, we can stop and give Him thanks. Whenever we consider the clothes He has given us to wear, we can stop and give Him thanks. Whenever we consider the food and drink He has given to sustain our lives, we can stop and give Him thanks. Whenever we consider the families He has given us, we can stop and give Him thanks. Whenever we consider the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we can stop and give Him thanks. Whenever we consider the forgiveness He has offered us, we can stop and give Him thanks. Yes, we can and should be diligent in communicating our thanksgiving to God in prayer!

(3) Through prayer, we can make supplications. Jesus taught that we should utilize the avenue of prayer to make supplications (to request things of God). For instance, in Jesus' model prayer, He prayed, “Give us this day our daily bread” and “do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:11, 13). 1 Timothy 2:1 says that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.” Therefore, it is not only on our own behalf that we can make requests of God through prayer, but on behalf of all mankind.

Isn't it wonderful that we have the opportunity to communicate our requests to God through the avenue of prayer! Whenever we are in need of physical things, we can ask God for those things. Whenever we are experiencing struggles with health difficulties, we can ask God for healing. Whenever we are tempted, we can ask God for strength to overcome them. Whenever we are uncertain, we can ask God for wisdom and guidance. Whenever we are made aware of the difficulties in the lives of others, we can petition God on their behalf. Whenever we consider the challenges of our nations and the leaders throughout the world, we can ask God to help them. Yes, we can and should be diligent in making supplications of God (in accordance with His will, see Matthew 6:10).

(4) Through prayer, we can make confessions and ask for forgiveness. Prayer has an important role in the Christian being forgiven of sin he/she has committed since becoming a Christian. In addition to repenting of those sins, the Scriptures teach that the Christian must confess his/her sins to God in prayer and ask Him for forgiveness. For instance, 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Then, in Acts 8:14-24, when Simon had sinned after becoming a Christian, he

was told, “Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you” (verse 22).

Isn't it wonderful that we have the opportunity to communicate our past failures to God and ask for His forgiveness! Whenever we speak words we should never have spoken, we can confess our sin to God and ask Him to forgive us. Whenever we lust after things that are forbidden, we can confess our sin to God and ask Him to forgive us. Whenever we have done what God has commanded us not to do, we can confess our sin to God and ask Him to forgive us. And, whenever we have not done what God has commanded us to do, we can confess our sin to God and ask Him to forgive us. Yes, we can and should be diligent in confessing our sins to God and asking Him to forgive us.

(5) Through prayer, we can cast our cares on God. There are many things that we experience in this life that have the potential to cause us great anxiety and steal our focus. Yet, Jesus has commanded us not to worry (see Matthew 6:25, 31, 34). Fortunately, we do not have to bear the burdens of life alone. Instead, God has provided the avenue of prayer so that we can cast all of these burdens upon God and do not have to worry or be anxious about anything. For instance, Philippians 4:6-7 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” And, 1 Peter 5:7 says, “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

Isn't it wonderful that we have the opportunity to communicate our concerns to God so that we do not have to be worried and anxious over them! Whenever we are faced with financial hardships, we can cast our cares upon God and trust that He will provide. Whenever we are faced with sickness and death, we can cast our cares upon God and trust in Him for strength. Whenever we are faced with concerns for the future, we can cast our cares upon God and trust that all things work together for good to those who love Him. Yes, we can and should be diligent in casting all of our cares upon Him and fully trust in Him to provide.

Conclusion

Those who are Christians have been promised that they will have their prayers heard by the God who created all things. And, they have been invited to use this avenue of prayer often. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 simply says, “pray without ceasing.” So, let's take full advantage of this opportunity to pray, recognizing that there is power in prayer (James 5:16)!

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: QA66

Written by Eric Krieg

Copyright: Copyright © 2018 GodSaidSo Press. Please use this material to God's glory and honor. Feel free to copy and distribute this material in any way that will bring God glory and help souls to be saved. However, you may not take any of the material out of context or change the material in any way. Please provide the author with the proper credit for the material.

Scripture quotations: Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.