

Prayer: What Does the New Testament Say About Prayer?

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I. Introduction

God commands us to pray for our enemies, leaders, and one another. And even though God knows what we need before we ask, He still commands us to pray. Therefore, pray we must. To husbands He gives a caution: "If you mistreat your wife, I will not hear your prayers."

II. Review

The Mechanics of Prayer

1. *We Must Address Our Prayers to God the Father*, Matt. 6:9.
2. *We Are to Ask for the Father's Will to be Done*, Matt. 6:10.
3. *We Are to Ask for Our Needs*, Matt. 6:11.
4. *We Must Confess Our Sins*, Matt. 6:12 (notice: it doesn't have to be at the beginning).
5. *We Are to Ask for Protection from the Devil*, Matt. 6:13.
6. *We Must Not Pray to Get Attention*, Matt. 6:5–6.
7. *We Must Not Pray Empty Repetitive Phrases*, Matt. 6:7.
8. *We Must Pray in Jesus' Name*, Jn. 14:13–14 (15:16; 16:23–24, 26).
9. *We Must Pray with Belief not Doubt*, Matt. 21:20–22; Heb. 11:6; Jam. 1:5–8.
10. *We Must Pray with a Thankful Attitude*, Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2 (1 Thess. 5:18).
11. *We Must Pray According to God's Will not Against It*, Jam. 4:3; 1 Jn. 5:14.
12. *If We're Rightly Walking with God, We Should Pray with Confidence*, Jn. 15:7; 1 Jn. 3:22.

Principles of Prayer in the Old Testament

1. *Be careful what you wish for*, Num. 11:18, 31–33.
2. *We can pray for our nation in order to avert God's wrath*, 2 Chro. 7:12–14; Jon. 3:8, 10.
3. *God will not answer those who will not acknowledge who He is: Creator*, Job 35:12–13.
4. *We must wait for God's answer*, Job 35:14.
5. *God will not hear our prayers while we have sin in our lives*, Ps. 66:18.
6. *God will not hear us if we ignore the cries of the poor*, Prov. 21:13.
7. *Prayer works*, Gen. 20:1–7, 17; Jud. 16:28–30; 1 Sam. 1:8–11, 20; 1 Kin. 17:17–22.

III. Principles of Prayer in the New Testament

- A. *Prayer is a command*, Matt. 6:9; 1 Thess. 5:17, why must we pray? Because our Lord commands it. And He wants it done “without ceasing.”
- B. *God knows what we need before we ask*, Matt. 6:8, since God knows the number of hairs on our heads (Matt. 10:30), He knows what we need before we pray.
- C. *Pray for your enemies*, Matt. 5:43–48, since God shows grace towards His enemies, our Lord wants us to emulate this same gracious behavior towards our enemies.
- D. *Pray for the governing authorities of the land*, 1 Tim. 2:1–2, God commands us to pray for everyone in authority “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life,” which means that we should pray for our leaders’ success.

What if a leader’s policies are wicked, do we still have to pray for their success? No, because the only success God is interested in is righteous success. Thus, we have the right to pray for their failure, just as the psalmist prays for God to thwart the schemes of the wicked, Ps. 140:8.

However, we need to be sure that the leader’s policies are indeed wicked before we pray for their failure. This means that we evaluate a leader’s policies with Scripture not a political ideology or anything else. For example, a political ideology may tell us that welfare support is wicked. But when examined through Scripture, we see that governments can provide their citizens welfare just as Israel’s provided welfare for those in the nation who needed it, Deut. 14:28–29.

- E. *Pray for one another*, Eph. 6:18; Jam. 5:16; 1 Jn. 5:16, we must always pray for one another. Sometimes those prayers will be crucial to our healing (since illness can be due to sin) or may save our lives.
- F. *God will not hear a husband who mistreats his wife*, 1 Pet. 3:7, husbands who do not treat their wives properly will not be heard by God.
- G. *Don’t give up, keep asking*, Lk. 18:1–8, our Lord warned us against repetitive prayers, Matt. 6:7. However, God hears repetitive prayers that are done in faith and according to His will and not for the sake of their many words.

IV. Conclusion

Though we may not completely know or understand just how prayer works, we must obey God’s command to pray. The more we’re obedient to His command, the more we will come to understand just why we must pray.