

# Prayer

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*"Pray" redirects here. For other uses, see [Pray \(disambiguation\)](#).*

*"The Prayer" redirects here. For the Jesus Prayer, see [Jesus Prayer](#).*



*Praying Hands* by Albrecht Dürer

**Prayer** is an [invocation](#) or act that seeks to activate a [rapport](#) with an object of [worship](#) through deliberate [communication](#). In the narrow sense, the term refers to an act of [supplication](#) or [intercession](#) directed towards a [deity](#) (a god), or a deified [ancestor](#). More generally, prayer can also have the purpose of [thanksgiving](#) or [praise](#), and in [comparative religion](#) is closely associated with more abstract forms of [meditation](#) and with [charms](#) or [spells](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

Prayer can take a variety of forms: it can be part of a set [liturgy](#) or [ritual](#), and it can be performed alone or in groups. Prayer may take the form of a [hymn](#), [incantation](#), formal [creedal](#) statement, or a spontaneous utterance in the praying person.

The act of prayer is attested in written sources as early as 5000 years ago. Today, most major [religions](#) involve prayer in one way or another; some ritualize the act, requiring a strict sequence of actions or placing a restriction on who is permitted to pray, while others teach that prayer may be practised spontaneously by anyone at any time.

Scientific studies regarding the use of prayer have mostly concentrated on its effect on the healing of sick or injured people. The [efficacy of prayer](#) in [faith healing](#) has been evaluated in numerous studies, with contradictory results.

- “beseeching the [Lord](#)” ([Exodus 32:11](#))
- “pouring out the soul before the Lord” ([1 Samuel 1:15](#))
- “praying and crying to [heaven](#)” ([2 Chronicles 32:20](#))
- “seeking unto [God](#) and making supplication” ([Job 8:5](#))
- “drawing near to [God](#)” ([Psalm 73:28](#))
- “[bowing](#) the knees” ([Ephesians 3:14](#))

We do not need to be well-spoken to talk to God. In fact, He hears what is in your heart, even if you can't express it well or even talk. And the Holy Spirit promises to express to the Father what you cannot.

“...[the Spirit](#) also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself [intercedes for us](#) with groanings too deep for words...” —[Romans 8:26 NASB](#)

Prayer presupposes a [belief in](#) the personality of [God](#), His ability and willingness to communicate with us, His personal control of all things and of all His [creatures](#) and all their actions.

### **Persistent and watchfully alert to specific needs:**

Rather than being unfocused or vague in our prayers, we are to be on watchful alert for specific needs about which we should pray. The [Apostle Paul](#) urged,

“**Devote** yourselves to prayer, **keeping alert in it** with an attitude of [thanksgiving...](#)” —[Col. 4:2 ESV](#)

The Greek verb *proskartereó* (προσκαρτερέω) translated “devote” above means to be steadfastly persistent and perseverant. Christ emphasizes persistent prayer in [Luke 11:5-10](#) and [Luke 18:1-8](#).

“With all prayer and petition **pray at all times** in the [Spirit](#), and with this in view, **be on the alert with all perseverance** and petition for all the saints...” —[Eph. 6:18 NASB](#)

“...devoted to prayer...” —[Romans 12:12b NASB](#)

“...continually devoting themselves to prayer...” —[Acts 1:14 NASB](#)

“pray without ceasing” —[1 Thessalonians 5:17 NASB](#)

## Prayer is not optional for God's people:

Prayer is frequently commanded or referred to in [Scripture](#) ( [Exodus 22:23, 27](#); [1 Kings 3:5](#); [Psalm 37:4](#); [Isaiah 55:6](#); [Joel 2:32](#); [Ezek. 36:37](#)).

"If...My people who are called by My name [humble](#) themselves and **pray and seek My face** and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from [heaven](#), will [forgive their sin](#) and will heal their land." —[2 Chronicles 7:13-14 NASB](#)

## Quotations:

"Prayer is like the [dove](#) that [Noah](#) sent forth, which blessed him not only when it returned with an [olive-leaf](#) in its mouth, but when it never returned at all." —Thomas Robinson, *Homiletical Commentary on the Book of Job*

"We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties." —Oswald Chambers

"We look upon prayer as a means of getting things for ourselves; the Bible idea of prayer is that we may get to know God Himself." —Oswald Chambers

"We must move from asking God to take care of the things that are breaking our hearts, to praying about the things that are breaking His heart." —Margaret Gibb

## Acceptable prayer must be...

- sincere ([Hebrews 10:22](#))
- offered with reverence and [godly fear](#)
- with a [humble](#) sense of our own insignificance as His [creation](#)
- and of our own [unworthiness](#) as [sinners](#)
- with unhesitating submission to God's [sovereign](#) will
- Prayer must also be offered in [faith](#) that [God](#) exists, and is the hearer and answerer of prayer, and that He will fulfil [His word](#).

"Ask, and ye shall receive" ([Matthew 7:7,8](#); [21:22](#); [Mark 11:24](#); [John 14:13-14](#)).

- and, generally, in the name of [Jesus Christ](#) ( [16:23-24](#); [15:16](#); [Ephesians 2:18](#); [5:20](#); [Col. 3:17](#); [1 Peter 2:5](#))

No rules are laid down anywhere in [Scripture](#) for the physical posture to be assumed by the suppliant (hands folded, hands held up, kneeling, stretched out with face on the ground, etc.). However, there is mention made of...

- kneeling in prayer ([1 Kings 8:54](#); [2 Chronicles 6:13](#); [Psalm 95:6](#); [Isaiah 45:23](#); [Luke 22:41](#); [Acts 7:60](#); [9:40](#); [Ephesians 3:14](#), etc.)
- [bowing](#) and falling prostrate ([Genesis 24:26](#), [52](#); [Exodus 4:31](#); [12:27](#); [Matthew 26:39](#); [Mark 14:35](#), etc.)
- spreading out the hands ([1 Kings 8:22](#), [38](#), [54](#); [Psalm 28:2](#); [63:4](#); [88:9](#); [1 Timothy 2:8](#), etc.)
- standing ([1 Samuel 1:26](#); [1 Kings 8:14](#), [55](#); [2 Chronicles 20:9](#); [Mark 11:25](#); [Luke 18:11](#), [13](#)).

Except for the “[Lord’s Prayer](#)” ([Matthew 6:9-13](#)), which is, however, rather a model or pattern of prayer than a set prayer to be offered up, we have no special form of prayer for general use given us in [Scripture](#).

### **Types of prayer:**

There are different kinds of prayer:

- Thanksgiving (prayers of gratitude)
  - [THANKS](#)—Why should people and nations give thanks to their Creator? What does the Bible say about it? [Answer](#)
  - What should we thank God for, and how should we praise Him? [Answer](#)
  - [THANKFULNESS](#)—Tips for New and Growing Christians—[GO](#)
  - Are you thankful to God? [GO](#)
- [Confession](#) and [repentance](#)
- Secret prayers ([Matthew 6:6](#))
- Social prayers (as in family prayers and social worship)
- Public prayers, in the service of the [sanctuary](#)
- [Worship](#) and [true worshippers](#)

- Intercessory prayers (praying on behalf of others) is commanded.

“Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the [elders](#) of the [church](#) and they are to pray over him...” —[James 5:14a NASB](#)

“Pray for the peace of [Jerusalem](#):

‘May they prosper who love you.’” —[Psalm 122:6 NASB](#)

“On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen;

All day and all night they will never keep silent.

You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves...” —[Isaiah 62:6 NASB](#)

“...My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you according to your folly...” —[Job 42:8 NASB](#)

“...I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, **for kings and all who are in authority**, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.” —[1 Tim. 2:1-2 NASB](#)

Praying for those in authority includes: our nation’s leaders, our local government leaders, our [church](#) leaders (pastor, elders, ministry leaders, deacons and deaconesses), etc.

“...Thus you shall [bless](#) the sons of Israel. ...” —[Numbers 6:23 NASB](#)

- Praying for God’s guidance

“O [Lord](#), I know that the path of [life of] a man is not in himself; It is not within [the limited ability of] man [even one at his best] to choose and direct his steps [in life].” —[Jeremiah 10:23 Amplified Bible](#)

“Direct my steps by Your word,

And let no iniquity have dominion over me.” —[Psalm 119:133 NKJV](#)

“I am the Lord your God,

who teaches you to profit,

who leads you in the way you should go.” —[Isaiah 48:17 NASB](#), ESV

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart,

And lean not on your own understanding;

In all your ways acknowledge Him,

And He shall direct [Or make smooth or straight] your paths.” —[Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV](#)

- Prayers of [blessing](#)

- Prayers for punishment—calling for [God's righteous judgment](#) on enemies of God and persecutors of His people / It is acceptable for God's righteous people to do this where warranted ([Psalm 109:14-15](#)).

### Examples of answered prayers in the Bible



the [prophet Isaiah](#) praying

- [Abraham's](#) servant prayed to [God](#), and [God](#) directed him to the person who should be [wife](#) to his master's son and heir ([Genesis 24:10-20](#)).
- [Jacob](#) prayed to [God](#), and [God](#) inclined the heart of his irritated brother, so that they met in peace and friendship ([Genesis 32:24-30](#); [33:1-4](#)).
- [Samson](#) prayed to [God](#), and [God](#) showed him a well where he quenched his burning thirst, and so lived to judge Israel ([Judges 15:18-20](#)).
- [David](#) prayed, and [God](#) defeated the counsel of [Ahithophel](#) ([2 Samuel 15:31](#); [16:20-23](#); [17:14-23](#)).
- [Daniel](#) prayed, and [God](#) enabled him both to tell [Nebuchadnezzar](#) his dream and to give the interpretation of it ([Dan. 2:16-23](#)).
- [Nehemiah](#) prayed, and [God](#) inclined the heart of the [king](#) of [Persia](#) to grant him leave of absence to visit and rebuild [Jerusalem](#) ([Neh. 1:11](#); [2:1-6](#)).
- [Esther](#) and [Mordecai](#) prayed, and [God](#) defeated the purpose of [Haman](#), and saved the [Jews](#) from destruction ([Esther 4:15-17](#); [6:7-8](#)).
- The believers in [Jerusalem](#) prayed, and [God](#) opened the [prison](#) doors and set [Peter](#) at liberty, when [Herod](#) had resolved upon his death ([Acts 12:1-12](#)).
- [Paul](#) prayed that the [thorn in the flesh](#) might be removed, and his prayer brought a large increase of spiritual strength, while the thorn perhaps remained ([2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#)).

We have very many Biblical testimonies that prayers have been answered ([Psalm 3:4](#); [4:1](#); [6:8](#); [18:6](#); [28:6](#); [30:2](#); [34:4](#); [118:5](#); [James 5:16-18](#), etc.).

Other examples:

- [Miracles](#)
- [Abraham](#) ([Genesis 17:18, 20](#); [18:23-32](#); [20:7, 17-18](#))
- [Moses](#) for...
  - [Pharaoh](#) ( [Exodus 8:12,13, 30,31](#); [Exodus 9:33](#))
  - the [Israelites](#) ( [Exodus 17:11,13](#); [32:11-14, 31-34](#); [Numbers 21:7,8](#); [Deuteronomy 9:18,19, 25](#))
  - [Miriam](#) ([Numbers 12:13](#))
  - [Aaron](#) ([Deuteronomy 9:20](#))
- [Samuel](#) ([1 Samuel 7:5-12](#))
- [Solomon](#) ([1 Kings 8](#); [2 Chronicles 6](#))
- [Elijah](#) ([1 Kings 17:20-23](#))
- [Elisha](#) ([2 Kings 4:33-36](#))
- [Isaiah](#) ([2 Kings 19](#))
- [Jeremiah](#) ([Jeremiah 42:2-10](#))
- [Peter](#) ([Acts 9:40](#))
- The [church](#) ([12:5-12](#))
- [Paul's](#) prayer for the father of [Publius](#) ([28:8](#))

## Answers to frequently asked questions:



- Why aren't my prayers answered? [Answer](#)
- What is [The Disciples's Prayer](#), aka The Lord's Prayer (taught to the disciples)
- [Prayer TIPS](#) for new and growing Christians
- What is [AMEN](#)?
- What is [Prayerwalking](#)?
- What is the INTERCESSION OF THE SPIRIT? [Answer](#)
- What is the [Holy Spirit](#)? aka Holy Ghost
- What is the INTERCESSION OF CHRIST? [Answer](#)
- [WHY PRAY?](#)—What's the Point of Praying?
- What is [effectual prayer](#)?
- What is [faith](#)?
- What is [the fear of the Lord](#)?
- What is [humility](#), and why is it very important?
- What is [repentance](#)?
- What is [confession](#) of sins?
- What is [forgiveness of sin](#)?
- [TEACHING THANKFULNESS](#)—Besides saying grace at meals, how can I teach my child to be thankful? [Answer](#)
- [MISSIONARIES](#)—How can I pray for my missionary? [Answer](#)
- [PERSECUTED](#)—Why should we pray and act for the suffering church? [Answer](#)



- What is the [holiness](#)?
- What is [righteousness](#)?
- What is [goodness](#)?
- What is [godliness](#)?
- What is the [means of grace](#)?
- What is the [goodness of God](#)?
- [FEAR, ANXIETY AND WORRY](#)—What does the Bible say? [Answer](#)
- [DEPRESSION](#)—What should a Christian do if overwhelmed with depression? [Answer](#)
- [PORNOGRAPHY ADDICTION](#)—Tips for the Porn Addict
- [STUDENTS](#)—What should you do when your teacher is an Evolutionist, and you believe in Creation? [Answer](#)
- [RELIGIOUS FREEDOM](#)—What is legally permissible for students in America's public schools? [Answer](#)
- [MUSLIMS](#)—How can followers of Christ best pray for Muslims? [Answer](#)
- TERRORISM—[Suggestions on how to pray about terrorist attacks and the war on terrorism](#)
- [HOLLYWOOD](#)—What is being done to change the values of Hollywood? [Answer](#)