

Prayer (introduction)

No matter where you go, or what culture you may encounter, you will find someone with some form of religion or faith. This is because there is something deep in the heart of man that seeks eternal things. Solomon, the wise king of Israel, wrote:

He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.
Ecclesiastes 3:11

One thing that virtually every religion or faith group will practice is prayer and/or meditation. All over the world you will find people who, in one way or another, pray! Write down the answers to these questions:

- How do people pray?
- To whom do people pray?
- Why do people pray?



I believe that all true believers have a desire to increase their prayer life. In fact, even Jesus' disciples wanted to learn how to pray. Let's consider their request:

Luke 11:1-13

1 - Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Q – why do you think they asked Jesus at this particular time?

Jesus responded this way:

2 - So He said to them, "When you pray, say:

*Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.*

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

3 - Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 - And forgive us our sins,

For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one."

5 - And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 - for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him';

7 - and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'?

8 - I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

9 - "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

10 - For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

11 - If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?

12 - Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 - If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Q – what did Jesus say here that really stood out to you?

The aim of this series is to help us to:

- Understand what prayer really is
- Understand who we are praying to
- Know why our prayers are often hindered
- Pray with a better sense of communion with God
- Pray according to the will of God
- Pray in faith
- Be persistent in prayer
- Understand the Holy Spirit and prayer
- Pray for others

May the Lord bless us as we learn together!

What Is Prayer?

How do you communicate? It may seem easy to answer such a question until you really begin to think about it. This is because the way that we communicate differs depending on who we are communicating with. For example, when we are speaking to a friend, we may speak differently than the way that we may speak to someone in a position of power, like a magistrate or judge. Our language, slang, expressions and even the words we use would be different. In fact, even the way that we dress would probably be different! Would you speak the same way to your doctor as you do to your spouse?

Q – For those of you who are married, do you speak to your spouse the same way now as you did when you first met? If the answer is no, how then is it different?

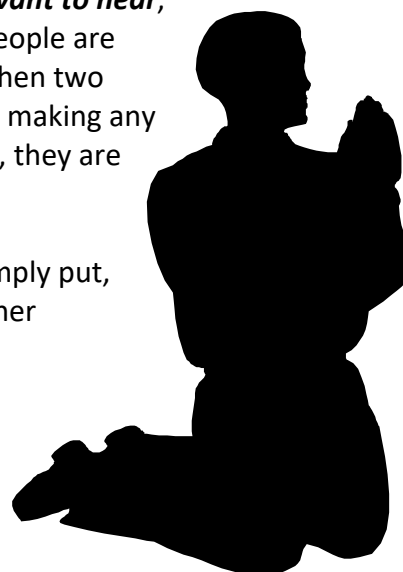
Q – For those of you who are single, would you speak the same way to a potential boyfriend/girlfriend as you would to one of your best friends? If the answer is no, why would it be different?

The way we communicate always depends on three things:

- Our communication depends on ***how well we know the person***. When we know little about a person conversation can sometimes be difficult, as both parties may not know what to say to each other. It can also be exciting when one discovers something different about another, or when something in common is revealed. However, conversation changes as we become familiar. If you know someone for a long time, you may have heard most of their interesting stories from the past and would then focus on the present and future. The more you know about a person, the more the conversation changes.
- Our communication depends on ***the circumstances surrounding the conversation***. What if your father was an important political figure? In public you probably would refer to him by his title (Prime Minister, Mr. President, etc.), but at home you would call him Dad. His wife would call him something more intimate (honey, sweetheart, even stupid!)
- Our communication depends on ***how much you really want to hear***, compared to how much you want to be heard. Some people are very good at talking but very bad at communicating. When two people are talking only to get their point across without making any attempt to understand the other person's point of view, they are usually not communicating.

What does this have to do with the way that I pray? Prayer, simply put, is the way in which we communicate to God, and it, like any other communication, depends on three things:

First, your ***relationship with God***. If you really don't know Him well, you may find prayer to be awkward, as you may not know what to say to Him. When God first begins to speak with you, it can be very exciting, especially when you begin to



discover what He is like. The more you know about Him, the more the conversation changes. You can express your joy, fears, hurts, mistakes and even anger, knowing that you will not be rejected or embarrassed.

Q – What can we do to develop a good relationship with God?

Second, the ***environment in which you are in*** can make a difference. When praying publicly you may address Him by his function (what He does) or by His titles. You may speak to Him about issues that concern the particular group that you are with and your speech may sometimes be more formal. It may also be necessary to be careful with what you say, in order to avoid any offence to those that may be listening. But when you are alone, you can be more intimate and talk to Him on a much more personal level.



Q – Do you find it more difficult to pray in public than in private? If so, why?

Third, your ***desire to hear from God*** may be the most important thing of all. If you are doing a lot of talking but never listening, you may not be communicating with God. In order to really get close to God, you must make a conscientious effort to listen to Him. You must really want to hear what He has to say to you. This happens when we pray over His word, or in other words we prayerfully read it and ask Him to speak through it. This is when we really begin to hear from God.

Q – Is there anything we can do to make us desire to hear from God more?

Prayer is the way that we gain access to heaven (the realm of God) to influence things on earth. God could do everything all by Himself, but he chooses to work with us through prayer. We are told to ask, seek, knock, (Matthew 7:7,8) and to pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We are encouraged to pray for all people asking for God's help as we pray and to be watchful (Ephesians 6:18). If we want the things on earth to become more like heaven, we must pray (Matthew 6:9,10).

Who Are We Praying To?

Who are we praying to? This may seem like an obvious question, but throughout the world you will find people who pray to idols, animals, the earth, their ancestors, saints, holy people, relatives and even demons. In many religions people pray to many “gods”, so it is important for us to really understand a few things about the God that we are addressing, and about the way that we address Him.

When people pray they are appealing to someone who they believe is **greater than themselves** and who has the **ability** to help them in their request. Whenever someone prays they are actually putting their **faith** in something or someone; or in other words, they trust that that being is able and willing to help them.

It is also important to know that our faith is only as good as the one that we put our faith in. I may ask a good friend to give me some money to help me out of debt, but no matter how much I believe in him, that friend can only give me the money if he has the **ability to do so**. If my friend has no money, my friend cannot help me! This is why a false god, idol or even a saint should not be prayed to, because they do not have the power to help me. If you pray to someone or something that does not have the power to help you, you will not receive help no matter how much you believe.



Here are three vital things to know about the One whom we pray to:

1. Only God, the Almighty Creator, is greater than all and has the ability and desire to help us.

Q – What do these verses tell us about the nature of God?

Isa 42:5 - Thus says God the LORD,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it,
Who gives breath to the people on it,
And spirit to those who walk on it:

Isa 45:18 - For thus says the LORD,
Who created the heavens,
Who is God,
Who formed the earth and made it,
Who has established it,

Who did not create it in vain,
Who formed it to be inhabited:
"I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other.

Psa 33:6 - By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

Dan 5:23 - And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who *holds* your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.



Psa 50:15- Call upon Me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

Psa 86:7- In the day of my trouble I will call upon You,
For You will answer me.

Psa 91:15- He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I *will be* with him in trouble;
I will deliver him and honor him.

2. We have **access** to the Father through the mediator, Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for our sins and made us children of God! Jesus is the only one that can save us from our sins and the only way to the father is through him.

Q – What do these verses say about Jesus?

Joh 14:6 - Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Rom 5:1 - Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Rom 5:2 - through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Eph 2:17 - And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

Eph 2:18 - For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Eph 2:19 - Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

Eph 3:12 - in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

Look at what The apostle Peter said in Acts 4:9-12 about Jesus after doing a great miracle in His name:

"...If we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

3. It doesn't really matter how much faith we have. What is really important is **whom our faith is in**.

Q – What does this verse say about faith?

Luk 17:6 - So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

God is our creator who is greater than all and has the desire and the ability to help us. We have access to Him through Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for our sins. Because of Jesus, we can talk to God in prayer about anything and have access to His help and protection

Why Do We Find It Difficult To Pray?

Prayer is the way that we gain access to the resources of heaven in order to bring change here on earth. When you think about it, God could do everything without us, but He chooses to work with us through prayer. Yet it seems that at some time in every believer's life, we find it difficult to pray. There are many examples this in the bible:

Psalm 22:2

O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;
And in the night season, and am not silent.

Psalm 80:4

O LORD God of hosts,
How long will You be angry
Against the prayer of Your people?

Q – Have you ever found it difficult to pray? Are their times when praying is more difficult than at other times?

Although we are encouraged to pray about everything, sometimes it seems that our prayers are hindered. At times it can seem that God is far away, while at other times God seems to be completely silent. We often must wait for a long time before we receive an answer from God, and sometimes He just says no! We must make sure that there is nothing on our part that would prevent us from hearing His voice or hindering our communication with Him. Here are 13 things that can hinder our prayers:

1. **Bitterness** - holding grudges against others will hinder our prayers -

Heb 12:15 - *looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;*

2. **Discouragement** - sometimes we become discouraged when it seems that God doesn't answer us and eventually give up -

Gal 6:9 - *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

3. **Doubt** - sometimes we can doubt God even though we believe in Him. Peter believed that Jesus was the Christ, yet doubted when he began to walk on water

Mat 14:31 - *And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"*

4. **Ignorance** - we are used to something different – we are not accustomed to talking to someone that we cannot see -

1Jn 4:20 - If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

5. **Lack of compassion** - we can become hardened to the needs of the world around us.

Mat 9:36-38 - But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

6. **Lack of discipline** - if we don't establish a routine of regular prayer we may become slack -

Dan 6:10 - *Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.*

7. **Lack of Faith** - if we really do not understand who God is, we will not believe that He will answer or even hear us -

Heb 11:6 - *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

8. **Lack of intimacy** - it is difficult to talk to someone that you don't really know well

Eph 3:16 - *that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,*

Eph 3:17 - *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,*

Eph 3:18 - *may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—*

Eph 3:19 - *to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

9. **Our enemies** - the devil wants to stop us, our flesh doesn't want to, and the world distracts us!

1Pe 5:8 - *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

Rom 7:18 - *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*

1Jn 2:16 - For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

10. **Physical weariness** - when we are tired it can become very difficult to concentrate or to keep our focus when praying.

1Ki 19:4 - But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!"

1Ki 19:5 - Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat."

11. **Religious Attitudes** - to some, prayer can be no more than a religious exercise with no depth or sincerity (Luke 18:9-14).

Luk 18:9 - Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

Luk 18:10 - "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

Luk 18:11 - The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.'

Luk 18:12 - I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

Luk 18:13 - And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

Luk 18:14 - I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

12. **Un-forgiveness** - If we do not forgive those who have wronged us, how can we expect to be forgiven of our own wrongs?

Mar 11:24 - Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Mar 11:25 - "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

Mar 11:26 - But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

13. **Wrong motives** - sometimes what we are asking for is not good for us (James 4:3)

Jas 4:3 - You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Let's make sure that there is nothing on our part that may hinder our prayers. If you ever feel that your prayers are stalled, go through this list to make sure that there is nothing on your part that is hindering your prayers.

How Do We Do It? (*what did Jesus say – part 1*)

So how do we do it? How do we pray? Is there a method that we should use? How do we prevent our prayers from becoming repetitious? Is there a way to pray without becoming distracted? Let's begin by discovering what is working and what is not working.

Q – What do you do when you pray? Do you have a special place where you pray? Do you have specific people or concerns that you pray about on a regular basis?

In the next several lessons we will have a very close look at the way that Jesus instructed us to pray when He delivered His sermon on the mount:

Matthew 6:5-15

5 - "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

6 - But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

7 - And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

8 - "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

9 - In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

10 - Your kingdom come.

Your will be done
On earth as *it is* in heaven.

11 - Give us this day our daily bread.

12 - And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.

13 - And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen.

14 - "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 - But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

So what did he actually say?

#1 - Don't be like the hypocrites!

What is a hypocrite? The word comes from the Greek word *hupokritēs*, which means "actor". So a hypocrite is someone who puts on an act, particularly when it comes to religious belief, virtue, morality, or principles. Jesus described what hypocrites do and their motive in verse 5:



5 - "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Q – What does Jesus say is their motive, and what was their reward? Does this happen today? Discuss.

Jesus did not like the actions of many of the religious leaders of His day, labeling them as hypocrites:

Matthew 15:7-9

7 - Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

8 - 'THESE PEOPLE DRAW NEAR TO ME WITH THEIR MOUTH,
AND HONOR ME WITH THEIR LIPS,
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME.

9 - AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME,
TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.' "

Q – What did Jesus say was the problem with these men and what did they do as a result?

Jesus definitely did not like hypocrisy:

Matthew 23:1-36

1 - Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,

2 - saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

3 - Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

4 - For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.

5 - But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.

6 - They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,

7 - greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'

8 - But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

9 - Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

11 - But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12 - And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

13 - "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

14 - Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

15 - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

16 - "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged *to perform it.*'

17 - Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

18 - And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged *to perform it.*'

19 - Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?

20 - Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it.

21 - He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it.

22 - And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

23 - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

24 - Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

25 - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

26 - Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness.

28 - Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

29 - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,



30 - and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

31 - "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

32 - Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' *guilt*.

33 - Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?

34 - Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: *some* of them you will kill and crucify, and *some* of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,

35 - that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

36 - Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Jesus told us not to be like hypocrites when we pray. In part 2 we will consider what He told us to do instead.

How Do We Do It? (*what did Jesus say – part 2*)

At the beginning of His sermon on the mount, Jesus first gave a warning not to be like the hypocrites, who prayed outwardly to be seen by men. What was the next thing that He said?

#2 – Go to your room!

6 - But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.



Three questions:

- Why did He tell us to go to a room?
- Why did He tell us to shut our door?
- What is the secret place?

Here are two reasons why you should go to your room and shut the door in prayer each day:

1. **Privacy (...go to your room...)** – one of the most valuable things that any believer can do is to be alone with God. In any relationship, being alone means that you can be yourself without any pressure or pretense. When alone, you can really talk about what you are really feeling without the opinions of others. Privacy encourages intimacy, which involves closeness and comes as a result of being alone with God. Intimacy means that you can be open and honest with God.
2. **Distraction (...shut the door...)** – by having a special place and even a specific time to pray, you can avoid the things that take your attention away and give your complete attention to the Lord.

Each of these are reasons why Jesus encouraged His disciples to “go to your room”. However, the most important reason to go to your room is because the Father is in the “secret place”.

Psa 91:1 - He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Psa 27:5 - For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.

Psa 31:20 - You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence From the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion From the strife of tongues.

If we go to a private place to pray, away from distractions, we have been assured by Jesus that we will meet the Father in the “secret place”. When we do this, Jesus assures us that we will be rewarded openly.

Q – What do you think the reward will be?

Jesus encouraged us (His disciples) not to be like the hypocrites who prayed loudly in front of people to be seen by men. Instead we should go to a private place and pray, knowing that we will be rewarded when we do so.

How Do We Do It? (*what did Jesus say – part 3*)

What did Jesus teach about prayer? So far, as we have been studying His teaching on prayer during His sermon on the mount, we have looked at two things that Jesus said:

- Don't be like the hypocrites
- Go to your room

Let's now consider the third thing that Jesus taught about prayer:



#3 – Do not use vain repetitions

Mat 6:7 - And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Mat 6:8 - "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

Q – What do you think Jesus meant by “vain repetitions”? Have you ever had experience of this?

In order to fully appreciate what Jesus meant, we need to consider the actual phrase that Jesus used:

- Repetitions - Greek **“battologeo”** – to stammer; to repeat the same things over and over, to use many idle words, to babble, prate.
- Vain - Greek **“me”** – a word of negation, implying a negative answer.¹

When these words are combined, it means that you are repeating the same things over and over in a negative sense; you are babbling for the wrong reason; you are repeating yourself in a vain way. But there is one other word that Jesus used:

Heathen – “ethnikos”²

1. Adapted to the genius or customs of a people, peculiar to a people, national.
2. Suited to the manners or language of foreigners, strange, foreign.
3. In the NT savouring of the nature of pagans, alien to the worship of the true God, heathenish.

In other words, Jesus is saying that we should not babble like the heathen when we pray. We should not simply say the same things over and over, in the way that is the custom of the pagan nations who do not worship the true God.

¹ Thayer Greek dictionary

² Thayer Greek dictionary

We have a very good example of this when Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40). The people were struggling with two opinions. Was Baal God, or was the LORD the true God? Elijah challenged them to build two altars, one for Baal and the other for the LORD. The challenge was simple: whoever answered by fire was the true God! Notice the way that the heathen Prophets prayed:

1Ki 18:26 - So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!"

But *there was* no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.

1Ki 18:27 - And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he *is* a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, *or* perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened."

1Ki 18:28 - So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.

1Ki 18:29 - And when midday was past, they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice. But *there was* no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention.



Q – Why were their prayers not answered?

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and called them hypocrites because of the way that they prayed:

Mat 23:14 - Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

Q – What was the problem with their prayers that Jesus pointed out? What was their motive? Does this sometimes happen in church life today?

Here is also something important that Jesus said in His sermon: "For they think that they will be heard for their many words." We know that we are encourage to talk to God about everything, but this is clearly not the same.

Q – What problem is Jesus addressing? Isn't it a good thing to speak to God about everything that is on our minds? Shouldn't we express ourselves in prayer?

Pro 10:19 - In the multitude of words sin is not lacking,

But he who restrains his lips *is* wise.

Ecc 5:3 - For a dream comes through much activity,
And a fool's voice *is known* by *his* many words.

Ecclesiastes 10:12-14

12 - The words of a wise man's mouth *are* gracious,
But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up;

13 - The words of his mouth begin with foolishness,
And the end of his talk *is* raving madness.

14 - A fool also multiplies words.
No man knows what is to be;
Who can tell him what will be after him?

Jesus is not discouraging us from sharing our heart before Him, but He made one thing very clear: don't be like them! We should never think that if we simply use lots of words, or if we say something enough times, God will hear us. God is not deaf or blind. He sees! He hears! He knows!

Mat 6:8 - "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

So far, in His sermon on the mount, Jesus has given us three principles that are vital for a healthy life of prayer:

- Don't be like the hypocrites
- Go to your room
- Don't use vain repetitions

In our next lesson we will begin to consider what is called "the Lord's prayer".

The Lord's Prayer (part 1)

Probably the most widely known and widely used written prayer on the planet is the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples, which we call "The Lord's Prayer". It is recorded in two places in scripture: Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4. Many have memorized this prayer and in many churches this prayer is prayed at some point in their services. In order for us to understand it better, we should consider both passages:

Mat 6:9 - In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

Mat 6:10 - Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as *it is* in heaven.

Mat 6:11 - Give us this day our daily bread.

Mat 6:12 - And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.

Mat 6:13 - And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory
forever.
Amen.

Luk 11:2 - So He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as *it is* in heaven.

Luk 11:3 - Give us day by day our daily bread.

Luk 11:4 - And forgive us our sins,
For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one."

Q – Was this prayer something that should be repeated, or is there more to it?

The first part of this prayer is all about God:

Our Father –

- Reminding us that He is our parent, the Father of us all, and we are His children, adopted into His family -

Rom 8:15 - For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

Rom 8:16 - The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

- Reminding us that He has the authority of a parent; that we are not as wise as our father and need to submit to Him

Heb 12:5 -And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:
"MY SON, DO NOT DESPISE THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD, NOR BE DISCOURAGED
WHEN YOU ARE REBUKED BY HIM;

Heb 12:6 - FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE CHASTENS, AND SCOURGES EVERY SON
WHOM HE RECEIVES."

Q – How does God as Father make you feel? Is your example of a father a positive one?

...in heaven...

- Heaven is the throne of God, which speaks of His ultimate authority over all things. God is Omnipresence (everywhere at once), Majestic, Powerful and Omniscient (knows everything).

Psa 11:4 - The LORD *is* in His holy temple,
The LORD's throne *is* in heaven;
His eyes behold,
His eyelids test the sons of men.

- Heaven reminds us that God is in control of everything and is reigning overall. It also reminds us to approach God with reverence:

Ecc 5:2 - Do not be rash with your mouth,
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.
For God *is* in heaven, and you on earth;
Therefore let your words be few.

Q – Does being reverent mean that we should be afraid?

Hallowed be Your name...

- This reminds us that the name (or character of God) is holy, without sin or any defilement and that we are imperfect.
- To “hallow” God’s name, is to magnify it, show respect toward it and to set it apart over all others.
- How can we hallow God’s name?
 - With our conversations – we can ask God to be hallowed in what we say.
 - With our thoughts – we can ask God to be hallowed in the way that we think.
 - With our lives – we can ask God to be hallowed in the way we live.
 - In our families – we can ask God to be hallowed in our families.
 - In the world – we can ask God to be hallowed wherever we go.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.

- We must pray that God will reign everywhere:
 - First in us
 - Next, wherever we go
 - Finally, in all the world

Q – What are we asking God to do when we ask Him to reign over us?



- We must pray that wherever we are, God will reign as king:

Mat 5:13 - "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

Mat 5:14 - "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Mat 5:15 - Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house.

Mat 5:16 - Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

We must pray that God's will be done:

Mat 7:21 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Rom 12:2 - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Col 1:9 - For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Summary:

We have seen that the first part of the Lord's prayer is all to do with acknowledging God:

- **He is our Father** – and He is a good father, so we can pray to Him with boldness and joy.
- **He is in heaven** – in control of all things, so we are reminded that He is the boss.
- **He is holy** – no sin, and should be approached with reverence.
- **The kingdom belongs to Him** – so we must pray that He would rule first in us, then wherever we are and finally that His kingdom would be established throughout the world.

In our next lesson we will consider the second part of the Lord's prayer.

The Lord's Prayer (part 2)

In our last lesson we saw that the first part of the Lord's prayer is about our relationship to God:

- **He's our Father** – and He is a good father, so we can pray to Him with boldness and joy.
- **He's in heaven** – in control of all things, so we are reminded that He is the boss.
- **He is holy** – no sin, and should be approached with reverence.
- **The kingdom belongs to Him** – so we must pray that He would rule first in us, then wherever we are and finally that His kingdom would be established throughout the world.

Now we will consider the next part of this amazing prayer, which is to do with praying for **ourselves** and **others**.

Give us this day our daily bread –

This is to do with our regular needs (our bread).

- **God is the author** - of all that is good for us both physical and spiritual. We depend on Him for our support – our pay, our job, our inheritance; all comes from Him.

1Ch 29:14 - But who *am* I, and who *are* my people,
That we should be able to offer so willingly as this?
For all things *come* from You,
And of Your own we have given You.

- **He encourages us to depend on Him every day** - notice it says our “daily” bread.
Mat 6:25 - "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"
- **He knows what we need** - before we ask:
Mat 6:31 - "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"
Mat 6:32 - For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
- **He promises to give us what we need** – especially when we put Him first:
Mat 6:33 - But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
Mat 7:7 - "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."
Mat 7:8 - For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.



Mat 7:9 - Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

Mat 7:10 - Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

Mat 7:11 - If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

But we need more than physical nourishment:

Deu 8:3 - So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

Q – Why did God allow them to suffer hunger?

We need the true bread:

Joh 6:26 - Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled."

Joh 6:27 - Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

Joh 6:28 - Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"

Joh 6:29 - Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

Joh 6:30 - Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?"

Joh 6:31 - Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN TO EAT.'"

Joh 6:32 - Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

Joh 6:33 - For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Joh 6:34 - Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

Joh 6:35 - And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."



Q - Is it wrong to ask God for the things that we desire as well?

Mat 7:11 - If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Psa 37:3 - Trust in the LORD, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

Psa 37:4 - Delight yourself also in the LORD,

And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

Summary

Jesus told us to pray "Give us this day our daily bread..." This means:

1. God is the author of all that is good and we depend on Him for our support
2. We must depend on Him daily
3. He knows what we need before we ask
4. He promises to give us what we need, especially when we put Him first
5. He is the true bread, and we need Him for our spiritual strength and vitality, not just for our physical needs
6. When we delight in Him, He will give us the desires of our heart

The Lord's Prayer (part 3)

So far we have considered the first part of the Lord's prayer which, as mentioned previously, deals with our relationship to God:



Mat 6:9 - In this manner, therefore, pray:
Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

Mat 6:10 - Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as *it is* in heaven.

In our last lesson, we began to consider praying for ourselves and others, and dealt specifically with praying for our needs:

Mat 6:11 - Give us this day our daily bread.

Now we are going to consider one of the most important elements of our prayer life. Jesus uses one simple sentence to deal with something that is spoken of repeatedly in scripture:

Mat 6:12 - And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.

In Luke, it is recorded this way:

Luk 11:4 - And forgive us our sins,
For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

What does it mean to “forgive”? Here are a few questions to begin our discussion:

Q - Does true forgiveness mean that you act as if the offence never happened? Does it mean that you forget that it ever happened? Does God forget?

What do we mean when we say forgive? Here is a definition of the English words forgive, pardon and remit:

- **Forgive** - to pardon; to remit, as an offense or debt; to overlook an offense, and treat the offender as not guilty. The original and proper phrase is to forgive the offense, to send it away, to reject it, that is, not to impute it, [put it to] the offender. But by an easy transition, we also use the phrase, to forgive the person offending. (Webster)



- **Pardon** - To forgive; to remit; as an offense or crime. Guilt implies a being bound or subjected to censure, penalty or punishment. To pardon, is to give up this obligation, and release the offender. We apply the word to the crime or to the person. We pardon an offense, when we remove it from the offender and consider him as not guilty; we pardon the offender, when we release or absolve him from his liability to suffer punishment.
- **Remit** - To forgive; to surrender the right of punishing a crime; as, to remit punishment.

The Greek word for forgive is “aphiēmi”, which means:

to *send forth*, in various applications: - cry, forgive, forsake, lay aside, leave, let (alone, be, go, have), omit, put (send) away, remit, suffer, yield up.

In other words, to forgive means to send away or to let go. But what are we letting go of? We are letting go of our desire to punish or to execute wrath or judgment.

In 1 Samuel 24 we have an amazing example of something that many never consider to be forgiveness. David was being chased by Saul, who wanted to kill him for treason even though David had done nothing to him. Saul entered a cave where David and his men were hiding, but did not know that they were there. David had the opportunity to kill the man who was clearly sinning against him and threatening his life, but he restrained his servants and did not allow them to rise against Saul. Instead he cut off a corner of Saul's robe to prove that he was close enough to kill Saul but chose not to. After Saul left the cave David came out and called to Saul.

1Sa 24:10 - Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and *someone* urged *me* to kill you. But *my eye* spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he *is* the LORD's anointed.'

1Sa 24:11 - Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that *there is* neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it.

1Sa 24:12 - Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you.



Here are a few important things that he said:

- ...my eye spared you – David chose not to take the matter of revenge and retribution into his own hands (v. 10)

- ...I have not sinned against you – David knew that he was innocent! (v. 11)
- ...you hunt my life to take it – David knew that Saul was guilty! (v. 11)
- ...Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you – David left judgement to God (v. 12)

David chose not to deal with Saul himself, even though he was innocent and Saul continued to pursue him. He protected himself by staying out of Saul's way and was determined to let God be the judge of the matter. This is a very interesting example of what it means to walk in forgiveness. Although Saul was guilty, David gave up his right to punish and overlooked his offence.

But why do we need to forgive? We will consider this question in our next lesson.

The Lord's Prayer (part 4)

In our last lesson we concluded that to forgive means to “let go”; that is, of our desire to punish or execute judgment. But the reality is that sometimes we may not really want to forgive!

Q – Do I really need to forgive, and if so, why?

Let's consider the parable that Jesus told when He was asked about forgiveness:



Mat 18:21 - Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

Mat 18:22 - Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

Mat 18:23 - Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

Mat 18:24 - And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

Mat 18:25 - But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

Mat 18:26 - The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

Mat 18:27 - Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

Mat 18:28 - "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'

Mat 18:29 - So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

Mat 18:30 - And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

Mat 18:31 - So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

Mat 18:32 - Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

Mat 18:33 - Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'

Mat 18:34 - And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

Mat 18:35 - "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

Questions for discussion:

- Who does the King represent?

- What did the King do when he found that one of his servants was unable to pay his massive debt? (v. 25)
- What did the servant do? (v.26)
- How did the King respond? (v. 27)
- What did the servant do when he found that one of his fellow servants was unable to pay his debt? (v. 30)
- What did the King do when he heard what had happened? (vs. 32-34)
- Did the King forget?

Why do I need to forgive?

- By forgiving you are no longer carrying the burden of judging the offender and avoid bitterness, resentment and anger
- By forgiving you are leaving the matter to God and can therefore go on with your life
- By forgiving you are admitting that you too have sinned in times past and are in need of pardon
- Forgiveness is for you!



What does the bible say about forgiveness?

- *We are commanded to forgive -*
Luk 17:3 - Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.
Luk 17:4 - And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."
- *If you forgive you will be forgiven -*
Mat 6:14 - "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
Mat 6:15 - But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
- *Forgiveness comes through Jesus -*
Eph 1:7 - In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace
- *Jesus gave us our greatest example of forgiveness -*
Luk 23:34 - Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.
- *Un-forgiveness can hinder your prayers -*
Mar 11:25 - "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.
Mar 11:26 - But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

The Lord's Prayer (part 5)

We are now coming to part of the Lord's prayer that for many have caused some misunderstanding and even confusion. What did Jesus mean when he said?

Mat 6:13 - And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.

Q – Does God tempt us?

It is important first of all to understand how the bible defines tempt/testing. There are a couple of words in Hebrew that are translated "tests" and "tested":

- "nasah" – to prove, test, try
- "bachan" – to examine, try, prove



Testing is a way of discovering, a means of determining if something is working properly, or a situation that shows how good something really is. There are many examples of this in the bible:

Gen 22:1 - Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

Exo 15:23 - Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they *were* bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah.

Exo 15:24 - And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

Exo 15:25 - So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast *it* into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them,

Exo 15:26 - and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For *I am* the LORD who heals you."

Deu 8:2 - And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

Deu 8:3 - So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

Pro 17:3 - The refining pot *is* for silver and the furnace for gold,
But the LORD tests the hearts.

Q – Does God already know what is in our hearts? If so, then why does he need to test us?

The answer to this question can be understood by these verses:

1Pe 1:6 - In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

1Pe 1:7 - that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

Why does God test us?

1. So that **we** know what is in our hearts
2. So that **others** can see what is in our hearts
3. So that our hearts can be **purified** and **refined**
4. So that we can be **overcomers**

God's motive is very different from the aims of the devil:

1. God's testing is to prove and refine – causing you to succeed.
2. The devil's tempting is to destroy and ruin – causing you to fail.



1Co 10:13 - No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

Even Jesus was tempted!

Luk 4:1 - Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

Luk 4:2 - being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.

So, how is Jesus telling us to pray? Here is the same verse in a few other translations of the bible:

- **(NLT)** And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.
- **(GNB)** Do not bring us to hard testing, but keep us safe from the Evil One.'
- **(NirV)** Keep us from falling into sin when we are tempted. Save us from the evil one.'

In other words, we are encouraged to ask God not to allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear; but instead, to deliver us from the strategies and schemes of the devil.



1Pe 5:8 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

1Pe 5:9 - Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

Eph 6:11 - Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Eph 6:12 - For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

Remember:

- God has control over the tempter and can save us from his power if we call on Him.
- God wants us to be overcomers, so He tests us in order for us to learn to defeat our enemies. Just like in school, we are tested to pass!
- God is not evil, so we cannot blame Him for our sinful desires. We already have them and must subdue them.

The Lord's Prayer (part 6)

Now we come to the final part of this amazing prayer that we call the Lord's prayer:
Mat 6:13 - For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.

When we come to the end of our times of prayer, Jesus is showing us three things that we should be mindful of:

Yours it the kingdom – the kingdom belongs to You; You are the King! In other words, we should always end our prayers recognizing the rule of God:

1Ch 29:11 - Yours, O LORD, *is* the greatness,
The power and the glory,
The victory and the majesty;
For all *that is* in heaven and in earth *is Yours*;
Yours *is* the kingdom, O LORD,
And You are exalted as head over all.

Dan 4:1 - Nebuchadnezzar the king,
To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:
Peace be multiplied to you.

Dan 4:2 - I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me.

Dan 4:3 - How great *are* His signs,
And how mighty His wonders!
His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,
And His dominion *is* from generation to generation.

When we end our time of prayer we must remind ourselves that, no matter what the circumstances, our Father is King! He rules over and is in control of everything! Even when we don't understand what may be happening to us, He understands and determines the outcome of all events!

Q – How should this make a difference in the way that we pray?

Yours is the power – You have all power and can do anything! Or in other words, we should always end our prayers recognizing the might of God!

Jer 27:5 - 'I have made the earth, the man and the beast that *are* on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me.

Jer 10:12 - He has made the earth by His **power**,
He has established the world by His wisdom,
And has stretched out the heavens at His discretion.



Dan 4:34 - And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever:

For His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom *is* from generation to generation.

Dan 4:35 - All the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing;
He does according to His will in the army of heaven
And *among* the inhabitants of the earth.

No one can restrain His hand

Or say to Him, "What have You done?"

1Ti 6:15 - which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only **Potentate**, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

1Ti 6:16 - who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting **power**. Amen.



Even when things are not going the way that we wish, we must remember to recognize that our Father has the ability to deliver, provide, heal, change circumstances, or simply, to do anything! We can pour out our complaint to Him and even share our discouragements, but we should always remind ourselves that our Father has the ability to do whatever He wants!

Q – How should this make a difference in the way that we pray?

Yours is the glory – You get all the glory! In other words, whatever good thing happens, the glory goes to You, not to me! We should always end our prayers recognizing the glory of God!

Dan 7:13 - "I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, *One* like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.

Dan 7:14 - Then to Him was given dominion and **glory** and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom *the one*
Which shall not be destroyed.

Luk 2:13 - And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

Luk 2:14 - "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

Joh 1:14 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His **glory**, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

2Pe 1:16 - For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

2Pe 1:17 - For He received from God the Father honor and **glory** when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2Pe 1:18 - And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

Jud 1:25 - To God our Savior,
Who alone is wise,
Be **glory** and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever.
Amen.



We know that God is worthy of glory, and we should always give Him glory when He works in our favor. However, there should also be an element of anticipation at the end of our prayer, even when our situation has not ended. We give Him glory, knowing that in the end, He will work things together for our good.

Q – How should this make a difference in the way that we pray?

Here is a summary of the Lord's prayer, and a simple pattern to follow when we pray:

1. Jesus encourages us to begin our prayers with worship, recognizing that God is our Father, enthroned in heaven and is holy. Based on this, we should pray that He would rule us and direct our steps.
2. Next, we are encouraged to pray for ourselves and in particular:
 - a. Our daily needs.
 - b. Our relationships with others.
 - c. Our protection from the evil one.
3. Finally, we are encouraged to return to worship, knowing that our Father is in control, has power to work on our behalf, and therefore should receive glory.

Try not to make this a legalistic ritual, but use this as a means of getting close to your heavenly Father by meeting Him in His secret place!

Be Persistent!

What happens in those moments of difficulty when you pray and it seems as if God is just not saying anything? Have you ever felt like giving up? Jesus knew that things were going to become difficult for His disciples, so He warned them and encouraged them not to loose heart. We have a great example for us to follow in the book of Luke. In chapter 17 when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, this was his reply:

Luke 17:20-37

"The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

Then He said to the disciples,

"The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see *it*. And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after *them* or follow *them*. For as the lightning that flashes out of one *part* under heaven shines to the other *part* under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed *them* all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

"In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods *are* in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back.

Remember Lot's wife.

Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night there will be two *men* in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two *women* will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two *men* will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."



And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?" So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

Jesus is once again explaining the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the end of the age. After Jesus had warned the disciples that difficult times were coming, He knew that they need to be encouraged not to give up when these things happened. So He spoke this parable, to encourage them:

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' "

Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

Luke 18:1-8

In this parable there are two persons mentioned:

A Judge –

- Q – What does it mean when it says that he “...did not fear God nor regard man?”
- Q – What power did this judge possess?
- Q – How should this judge expect to be treated in his courtroom?

A widow –

- Q – What was the widow’s status?
- Q – What was the widow’s problem?
- Q – What did the widow do?

There is a comparison of these two persons:

The Judge -

- Q – Who does the judge represent and in what manner (how)?
- Q – What is meant by “...though He bears long with them?”

The widow –

- Q – Who does the widow represent and in what manner (how)?
- Q – How does the widow trouble the judge

Jesus told this parable knowing that His disciples were going to need two things when they prayed during difficult times:

They were going to need **persistence**, particularly when it seemed as if God was taking a long time to answer. Persistence means “To continue in an opinion or course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition” (Oxford). Jesus encourages us to pray when times are difficult. Even though it may seem as if He is taking a long time to answer, if we are persistent we are assured that the answers will suddenly come, and He will deal with any adversary that may stand against us. Here is another example that gave of persistence:

And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Luke 11:5-10

They were also going to need to have **faith in God**, which simply means that they had to trust that God would help them when they asked. Faith is what gives us the assurance that we will receive what God has promised us:

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.

Hebrews 11:1 (NLT)

When we pray, we must be sure of **what God has said**. This is very important! If we put our faith in something that God has not said, we will not receive the result that we have hoped for.

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

1 John 5:14,15

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

James 4:3

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

We must also trust that **what He has said is true**. If we really do not believe that God's way is right, we will not be able to please Him.

But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6

Jesus encourages us to pray and not loose heart. No matter what we are now facing or will face in the future, let us remember to trust in God as we cry out day and night to Him. Our persistence will pay off in the end!

Additional information:

Here are a few quotes from ancient writers concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, which site the exit of Christians from Jerusalem just before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70:

Ancient sources:

The people of the Church in Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city who were worthy of it to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Perea which they called Pella. To it those who believed on Christ traveled from Jerusalem, so that when holy men had altogether deserted the royal capital of the Jews and the whole land of Judaea..."

— *Eusebius, Church History 3, 5, 3*

This heresy of the Nazoraeans exists in Beroea in the neighbourhood of Coele Syria and the Decapolis in the region of Pella and in Basanitis in the so-called Kokaba (Chochabe in Hebrew). From there it took its beginning after the exodus from Jerusalem when all the disciples went to live in Pella because Christ had told them to leave Jerusalem and to go away since it would undergo a siege. Because of this advice they lived in Perea after having moved to that place, as I said."

— *Epiphanius, Panarion 29,7,7-8*

For after all those who believed in Christ had generally come to live in Perea, in a city called Pella of the Decapolis of which it is written in the Gospel that it is situated in the neighbourhood of the region of Batanaea and Basanitis, Ebion's preaching originated here after they had moved to this place and had lived there."

— *Epiphanius, Panarion 30, 2, 7*

So Aquila, while he was in Jerusalem, also saw the disciples of the apostles flourishing in the faith and working great signs, healings, and other miracles. For they were such as had come back from the city of Pella to Jerusalem and were living there and teaching. For when the city was about to be taken and destroyed by the Romans, it was revealed in advance to all the disciples by an angel of God that they should remove from the city, as it was going to be completely destroyed. They sojourned as emigrants in Pella, the city above mentioned in Transjordana. And this city is said to be of the Decapolis."

— *Epiphanius, On Weights and Measures 15*

How Do I Know God's Will When I Pray?

Should I buy this house or this car? Which school should I send my children to? Shall I take this job or not? What should I study at school? Should I marry this person? Are these the right friends for me? Is this the way that God wants me to serve?

All of these questions have one thing in common: even though there are principles in scripture for every circumstance and situation, yet there is no verse in the bible that will answer these questions specifically with a "yes" or "no".



Q – Have you had questions like these and actually heard from God with the right answer? Have you ever thought that you heard from God and simply got it wrong? If both, what was the difference between the two?

In this next section we are going to look at 7 suggestions to help us to know God's will

#1 - Attitude

We must be willing to do whatever God wants us to do (even if we do not like it). This may be the most important issue when it comes to knowing the will of God. If we really have our minds set on doing something before we ask, then our reasoning will be clouded and we will not be able to hear what God is saying to us.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:1,2

We are strongly urged to offer ourselves to God and allow Him to renew our minds. In this way we can then know God's will. This is something that we must do, but when we offer ourselves to God, He actually gives us the ability to do what we are incapable of doing.

Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

Philippians 2:12,13
(New Living Translation)


In these verses we are told to work hard so that what has happened to us from within would be clearly seen on the outside. But then we are told that actually, God is the one that makes us want to do his will, and then makes us able to do it!

But what if I really don't want to do something when it seems that God wants me to, or what if I really want to do something when it seems that God does not want me to?

Q – Is it wrong to say to God that I don't want to do something, even when I think that He has told me to do it?

Q - Am I sinning if I ask God for something more than once if I think that He does not want me to have it or do it?

Once again, we have great examples to follow in scripture. We read in Exodus 3 that God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and gave him some instructions:



Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

Exodus 3:9,10

Moses did not want to go, and gave God several reasons why he felt that he should not go:

But Moses said to God, "Who *am* I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Exodus 3:11

This dialogue went on for quite some time, even to the point where God became angry with him. However, God responded to each of his arguments and was very patient with Moses. After some persuasion, Moses went and the rest is history!

Something similar happened with Gideon in the book of Judges. The Angel of the LORD appeared to him and gave him direction:

Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"

Judges 6:14

Gideon gave a couple of good reasons why he couldn't go, but after a few words of encouragement Gideon finally did what he was instructed to do, even though he was afraid:

So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the LORD had said to him. But because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do *it* by day, he did *it* by night.

Judges 6:27

However, we also have the example of Balaam the soothsayer in Numbers 22. Balaam was told not to go with the princes of Balak, king of Moab, but Balaam wanted to go regardless. In the end, God allowed him to go and almost killed him on the way. The entire incident eventually led to Balaam's death!

#2 - Lifestyle

We must be sure that there is nothing hindering our ability to hear from Him. There are a number of things that can get in the way and prevent us from hearing from God:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Hebrews 12:1

In the section titled "Why do we find it difficult to pray?" (pages 9-11) there are 13 additional reasons listed that show why our ability to hear God's voice can be hindered.

How Do I Know God's Will When I Pray? (part 2)

How do I know God's will when I pray? So far we have two things to consider in our attempt to find the will of God:

#1 - Our **attitude** must be that we are willing to do whatever God wants, even if we don't like it

#2 - Our **lifestyle** must not hinder us from our ability to hear God's voice.

#3 – Ask!

If you really want to know God's will for your situation, you have to ask Him! When it comes to prayer, this is the simplest and most basic concept of all. Yet it seems that this is the one that we fail to do the right way.

Q – Have you ever asked God for something and received no answer?

We are told again and again in scripture to ask. However, if we look more carefully we can gain more understanding as to how we should ask:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you **ask** in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you **ask** anything in My name, I will do *it*."

John 14:12-14

Q – What did Jesus mean when he said "...and greater works than these he will do..." (hint: Acts 2:4-22; 2:42; 4:4; 5:15; 19:12)

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

John 15:7

But we must not ask amiss...

Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

James 4:1-3

Q – What does it mean to ask amiss?

For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And

whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

1 John 3:20-22

But we must ask according to His will...

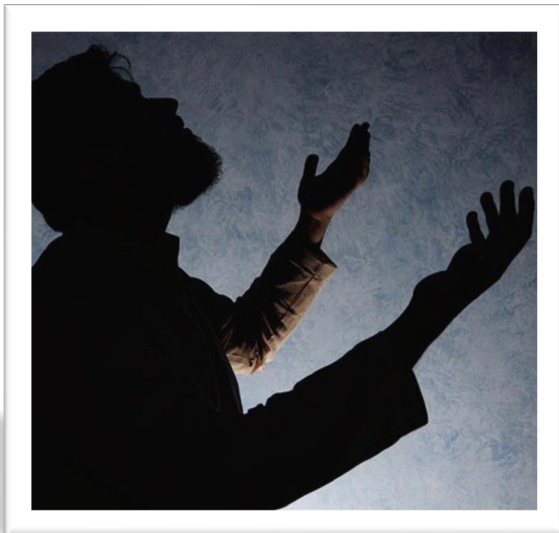
Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

1 John 5:14,15

So, how do we find His will? We seek...

Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:12,13



Glory in His holy name;
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the
LORD!

Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face evermore!

Psalms 105:3,4

"I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,
And find out knowledge *and* discretion.
I love those who love me,
And those who seek me diligently will find me.
Proverbs 8:12, 17

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Matthew 6:31-33

Q – What do you think it means to seek God's face?

We knock – this involves persistence and diligence. Solomon gives us a great example of this:

He who observes the wind will not sow,
And he who regards the clouds will not reap.
As you do not know what *is* the way of the wind,
Or how the bones *grow* in the womb of her who is with child,

So you do not know the works of God who makes
everything.
In the morning sow your seed,
And in the evening do not withhold your hand;
For you do not know which will prosper,
Either this or that,
Or whether both alike *will be* good.
Ecclesiastes 11:4-6



Q – How do you knock in prayer?

We call - one way of asking is to call on Him, which is usually what we are told to do when we are in trouble or have a problem:

Call upon Me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."
Psalm 50:15

The LORD *is* near to all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.

Psalm 145:18

'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

Jeremiah 33:3

I

Q - Is it true that sometimes we hesitate to call on God for help? Why?

We can always depend on our heavenly Father to come to our aid whenever we are in trouble. He has promised to help us with our problems when we call on Him.

So far we have looked at three important things to consider in our attempt to know God's will:

1. Our attitude must be that we are willing to do whatever God wants, even if we don't like it.
2. Our lifestyle must not hinder us from our ability to hear God's voice.
3. We must ask with the right motives, seek Him first, calling upon Him for everything that we need.

We have a few more to consider in the next several lessons!

How Do I Know God's Will When I Pray? (part 3)

How do I know God's will when I pray? Let me remind you of what we have considered so far:

1. **Attitude** – before I even consider what God wants me to do, where God wants me to go, or how God wants me to respond, I must be willing in my heart and mind to do whatever He wants, even if I don't like it.
2. **Lifestyle** – I must do my best to ensure that there is nothing that may be hindering my ability to hear from God.
3. **Ask** – I need to petition Him, knowing that He is a loving Father that has my best interest in mind, and understanding that He really does have my best interest in mind.

If my attitude is right and there is nothing hindering me from hearing what God is saying, then I should be in a position to hear the voice of God when I ask Him. But how do I know that it is really Him speaking?

#4 – Confirmation

God will make clear what He wants to communicate to me! There are almost always four important elements of confirmation that He uses to convey His will to us. The first may seem obvious, but is the most important of all:

His word – the word of God is true, solid, and has stood the test of time. Therefore, if what you are asking or seeking goes against a principle of scripture, you should not do it.

Your word *is* a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the
soul;
The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise
the simple;
The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the
heart;
The commandment of the LORD *is* pure,
enlightening the eyes;

Psalm 19:7,8

Even if it comes from an angel or spirit. Even if it comes after a miraculous sign or from a prophecy that seems to come to pass.

"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go



after other gods'—which you have not known—'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 13:1-3

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Matthew 24:24

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1

Q – How could you identify a false prophet?

The word of God is the measure in which we determine all truth. However, there are three other elements that are much more subjective but are still part of the way that God speaks to us:

His voice – it is clear in scripture that God speaks to His people by inner impressions, also described as the voice of the Lord. One example of this is when God spoke to the prophet Samuel for the first time:

1 Samuel 3:1-11

Now the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; *there was* no widespread revelation. And it came to pass at that time, while Eli *was* lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark of God *was*, and while Samuel was lying down, that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, "Here I am!" So he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." And he said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down.

Then the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." He answered, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." (Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor was the word of the LORD yet revealed to him.) And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. So he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you did call me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD had called the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times,



"Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears." Then the LORD said to Samuel: "Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

Q - God spoke to Samuel, but how did he know that it was God?

- He heard a call (v. 4)
- He was instructed by one who had authority over him (v.9)
- He obeyed instruction and was able to hear all that God spoke to him (vs. 11, 19-21)

God called so clearly that Samuel thought that Eli had spoken to him. This was a very strong inner impression that Eli did not hear. God will speak to us inwardly; however, we still need further confirmation than this:

His circumstances – when God speaks He almost always will bring about circumstances that will let me know that what I heard was actually His voice. In the case of Eli, everything that Samuel spoke came to pass. Later in the same chapter we are told that the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

Another good example of outward circumstances bringing confirmation was the conversion of Saul, who later became the apostle Paul:

Acts 9:1-6

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."



Q - God spoke to Saul, before he became a believer, but how did he know that it was God?

He saw a vision, which was a dramatic light from heaven, and he then heard a voice. But all of this was accompanied by outward manifestations:

- The men with him heard the voice
- He was blinded

- His sight was eventually restored

In the case of Samuel, the things that were spoken to him came to pass. With Saul, there were clear outward circumstances that confirmed what had been spoken to him. But in each of these cases, there was still another way that showed them that God was speaking:

His people – God almost always confirms His message to us through His people. In other words, He uses a godly person, who is often someone in authority, to confirm his word to us. In the case of Samuel, he used the experience of the Eli the priest to help Samuel to understand God's voice. With Saul it was slightly different. God used a disciple named Ananias to convey His message:

Acts 9:7-18

And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus. And he was three days without sight,

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." So the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for *one* called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting *his* hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."



But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

Here is one more example of how God uses His people to confirm His will. First let's consider the way that God speaks to Cornelius, the Roman centurion:

Acts 10:1-8

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do." And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. So when he had explained all *these* things to them, he sent them to Joppa.



Q - God speaks to Cornelius, but how did he know that it was God?

- Cornelius had a vision (v. 3)
- He was given instructions to send men to search for Peter (vs. 5,6)
- He explained this to his trusted servants and then sent them, according to the vision (v. 8)

Notice that he had people that he spoke to and trusted, who later became witnesses. This was both wise and safe. Around the same time, something is happening with Peter:

Acts 10:9-24

The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them." Then Peter went down to

the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"

And they said, "Cornelius *the* centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." Then he invited them in and lodged *them*. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.

Q - God spoke to Peter, but how did he know that it was God?

- He heard the voice of God in a vision, which impressed his heart
- He had a second impression, that three men were seeking him and that he should go with them.
- The outward circumstances matched his inner impression. The men were there!
- Peter took some brethren from Joppa with him, who later became witnesses. This was both wise and safe.

Where *there is* no counsel, the people fall;
But in the multitude of counselors *there is* safety.

Proverbs 11:14

Without counsel, plans go awry,
But in the multitude of counselors they are established.

Proverbs 15:22

For by wise counsel you will wage your own war,
And in a multitude of counselors *there is* safety.

Proverbs 24:6

Conclusion – How do you know when God is speaking?

- Through His word
- Through His voice
- Through His circumstances
- Through His people

How Do I Know God's Will When I Pray? (part 4)

In our attempt to answer the question "How do I know God's will when I pray", we have already considered 4 things:

1. **Attitude** – I must be willing in my heart and mind to do whatever He wants, even if I don't like it.
2. **Lifestyle** – I must do my best to ensure that there is nothing that may be hindering my ability to hear from God.
3. **Ask** – I need to petition Him, knowing that He is a loving Father that has my best interest in mind, and understanding that He really does have my best interest in mind.
4. **Confirmation** – I must look for God to confirm that which He is saying through:
 - a. His word
 - b. His voice
 - c. His circumstances
 - d. His people

The next concept is often misunderstood and needs careful consideration:

#5 – Peace

This word means much more than the absence of noise or strife. It suggests tranquillity, rest, harmony and safety. When we know that we are doing the will of God, there is calm and rest in our inner man, even when things are not going well, or when are uncertain of the outcome of a situation. When we do God's will, we are safe!

The following verses give us a formula that will help us to avoid worry and will guard our heart and mind:

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand. 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.

Philippians 4:4-7

Here are three things that we are told to do:

Rejoice in the Lord –

Q - What does this actually mean?

This is not just having a positive attitude or being happy, but it is centred on the Lord. We are encouraged to rejoice, because no matter what is happening around us, the Lord is in control. I can always find a way to rejoice when I know that everything that happens to me has purpose and that even the difficult things are producing a positive result. Here are a couple of verses that make this even more clear:

Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His purpose*.

Romans 8:27, 28

We rejoice because God is in control!

Let your gentleness be known to all men.

Q - What is meant here by gentleness and how can we let this be known to all men?

When difficulty comes, let everyone see that your reaction is not one of temper, anger or stress, but let your meekness be seen by all. This can only be done when you know and understand that the Lord is near. Those who worry often are quick-tempered, talk too much and end up doing something that they regret.

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James 1:19, 20

But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be ***gentle*** to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.

2 Timothy 2:23-26

Be anxious for nothing...

Q – Is it possible to never be anxious?

We are told here what to do when problems come. We talk to God about the situation (pray), bringing petitions and requests to God (supplications), with a thankful heart (knowing that He is in control). When we do this we are placing our difficulties into God's hands and removing them from ours! Again and again, we are encouraged through scripture not to worry:

"And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things.

Luke 12:29, 30

So, we were told to rejoice, let our gentleness be known, and not to be anxious, but in instead make our request known to God. When we do these things we are promised that the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:7

This is one of the ways in which we can know God's will, by allowing His peace to guard our heart and our mind.

Q – But how can peace guard our hearts and minds?

When we are doing God's will, it will always leave us in a state of peace. When we step out of God's will, we lose His peace. Therefore, we must let the peace of God rule in our hearts:

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Colossians 3:15



When we let God's peace rule in our hearts, it will guard our heart and mind. But how can this be done? Here is a simple suggestion.

When you are in a situation and find that you have no peace in a matter, first think back to the last time that you had experienced God's peace. Then retrace your steps until you remember the situation that caused you to lose it. Do whatever is necessary to make that situation right, and God's peace will return to you. In this way the peace of God will rule in your heart and will guard you from making a mistake or a bad decision. It will protect your mind from feeling guilty or your heart from feeling condemned.

How Do I Know God's Will When I Pray? (part 5)

I have already suggested 5 things that should help us to answer the question "How do I know God's will when I pray?" Here is a review of what we have looked at so far:

1. **Attitude** – I must be willing in my heart and mind to do whatever He wants, even if I don't like it.
2. **Lifestyle** – I must do my best to ensure that there is nothing that may be hindering my ability to hear from God.
3. **Ask** – I need to petition Him, knowing that He is a loving Father that has my best interest in mind.
4. **Confirmation** – I must look for God to confirm that which He is saying through:
 - a. His word
 - b. His voice
 - c. His circumstances
 - d. His people
5. **Peace** – I must allow the peace of God to rule in my heart, which will guard my heart and my mind.

#6 – Patience

Sometimes we simply must wait on God until He speaks. We must learn to be patient when we pray!

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him;
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.
Psalm 37:7

Q – Why do we sometimes find it difficult to wait for God to speak to us?

God wants to produce patience in us! Consider these verses that speak of the development of patience in the believer and discuss them.

But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with **patience**.

Luke 8:15

You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put *some* of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your **patience** possess your souls.

Luke 21:16-19

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the **patience** and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Romans 15:4



For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all ***patience*** and longsuffering with joy;

Colossians 1:9-11

Q - It has been said that sometimes God says yes, sometimes God says no, and sometimes God says "wait". Is this true?

Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the LORD!

Psalms 27:14

To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

Truly my soul silently *waits* for God;
From Him *comes* my salvation.

Psalms 62:1

Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their masters,
As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes *look* to the LORD our God,
Until He has mercy on us.

Psalms 123:2

Q - When do we wait on the Lord? What do we wait for?

Here are some of the results of waiting on the Lord:

He strengthens us:

But those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew *their* strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31

He saves us!

Do not say, "I will recompense evil";
Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.

Proverbs 20:22



We will not be ashamed:

A Psalm of David.

To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
O my God, I trust in You;
Let me not be ashamed;
Let not my enemies triumph over me.
Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed;
Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause.

Psalm 25:1-3

We shall inherit the earth:

For evildoers shall be cut off;
But those who wait on the LORD,
They shall inherit the earth.

Psalm 37:9

Wait on the LORD,
And keep His way,
And He shall exalt you to inherit the land;
When the wicked are cut off, you shall see *it*.

Psalm 37:34

We receive power:

And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Acts 1:4,5

One of the most important part of understanding God's will is to wait patiently for Him to speak or to act. We often miss His will by going ahead of Him before He has answered. One of the best examples of this is when King Saul was fighting with the men of Israel against their enemies, the Philistines. They were outnumbered and in danger:

Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the seashore in multitude. And they came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth Aven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger (for the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits. And *some of* the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

1 Samuel 13: 5-7

Saul was told to wait by the prophet Samuel, but because Samuel had not arrived at the appointed time, Saul took matters into his own hands and offered a sacrifice that was unlawful and improper:

Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering.

1 Samuel 13:8,9

Because Saul did not keep the commandment of the LORD, he lost his kingdom:

Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him. And Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* you did not come within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the LORD.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering." And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him *to be* commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

1 Samuel 13:10-14

Notice that Saul made no effort to pray or to seek the LORD for guidance or direction. Instead he panicked and acted on his own. This was an act of disobedience, but there was much more to it than what first appeared. Saul's action showed that his heart was not after God. This is an important lesson for us to consider. When we are unwilling to wait, it shows that we lack trust in God and that we really want to do things our own way. Later, David was found to be the man after God's own heart.



Waiting is really about seeking God before acting. David was in a similar circumstance as Saul, but he acted differently. While he was away, David's city was attacked and burned with fire. When he and his men returned, things were very bad:

Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire, and had taken captive the women and those who *were* there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried *them* away and went their way. So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive.

1 Samuel 30:1-3

His men were greatly distressed and wanted to stone him because of what had happened, but David strengthened himself in the LORD:

Then David and the people who *were* with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep. And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive. Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

1 Samuel 30:4-6

But David acted differently from Saul. He went to the priest in the proper manner and inquired of the LORD, and God promised him victory:

Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, "Please bring the ephod here to me." And Abiathar brought the ephod to David. So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?" And He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake *them* and without fail recover *all*."

1 Samuel 30:7,8

When we wait on the LORD, we are actually putting our circumstances in God's hands and allowing Him to work on our behalf. Finally, here are a few passages of scripture to encourage us to wait on the LORD:

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
And in His word I do hope.
My soul *waits* for the Lord
More than those who watch for the morning—
Yes, more than those who watch for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the LORD;
For with the LORD *there is* mercy,
And with Him *is* abundant redemption.

Psalms 130:5-7

Psalms 131

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

LORD, my heart is not haughty,
Nor my eyes lofty.
Neither do I concern myself with great matters,
Nor with things too profound for me.
Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul,
Like a weaned child with his mother;
Like a weaned child *is* my soul within me.
O Israel, hope in the LORD
From this time forth and forever.

How Do I Know God's Will When I Pray? (part 6)

We have looked at 6 suggestions that will help us to determine God's will when we pray:

1. **Attitude** – I must be willing in my heart and mind to do whatever He wants, even if I don't like it.
2. **Lifestyle** – I must do my best to ensure that there is nothing that may be hindering my ability to hear from God.
3. **Ask** – I need to petition Him, knowing that He is a loving Father that has my best interest in mind, and understanding that He really does have my best interest in mind.
4. **Confirmation** – I must look for God to confirm that which He is saying through:
 - a. His word
 - b. His voice
 - c. His circumstances
 - d. His people
5. **Peace** – I must allow the peace of God to rule in my heart, which will guard my heart and my mind.
6. **Patience** – I need to wait patiently on the Lord until He speaks or acts.

And now we will consider the 7th suggestion, which is certainly one of the most important of all:

#7 – Faith

Because of the importance of faith when determining God's will, we need to consider this carefully.

What is faith?

Q – How would you define faith?

In the Old Testament, the word faith is only used twice (Daniel 32:20 and Habakkuk 2:4). The word in hebrew is “*emunah*” and means “firmness, fidelity, steadfastness, steadiness”. However, in the New Testament there are 227 verses with a variation of the word “*pistis*”, which means “conviction of the truth of anything, belief”. The Cambridge dictionary defines faith as “great trust or confidence in something or someone”.



Some believe that if you simply have faith, faith itself will get you what you want. This is not true. Just because I believe something does not make it true. Many believe that the earth is flat, but their belief does not make it true. Many believe that God does not exist, but their belief does not make it true. Here are some important things to understand about faith:

1. *Faith is always in something or, in particular, someone:*

Mark 11:20-23

Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." So Jesus answered and said to them, "**Have faith in God.** For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

Jesus did not tell them to simply have faith, but to have faith in God. Jesus was encouraging them to have strong faith in the one who was sending them. He was not telling them just to have faith, but He was directing them to the one that they should put their trust in.



Q – Why did He refer to a mountain? Was Jesus suggesting that they could have anything that they wanted?

2. *The object of your faith must be able and willing to deliver:*

No matter how much faith you have in someone, if that person does not have the desire to help you or if they do not have the ability to help you, help will not come! Consider what happened when Elijah confronted the false prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18. The people were between two opinions and needed to decide whether to serve the god Baal, or to serve the LORD, God of Israel. So he told them to build two identical altars with offerings on them, and then allowed them to call on their god. It was simple; the God who answered by fire would show that He was God. We pick up the narrative in verse 26:

So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But *there* was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.

No matter how much faith they had in their god Baal, there was no answer, because Baal had no ability to answer by fire. But look what happened when Elijah prayer to the Lord:

Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid *it* on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and

pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." Then he said, "Do *it* a second time," and they did *it* a second time; and he said, "Do *it* a third time," and they did *it* a third time. So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water.

And it came to pass, at *the time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You *are* God in Israel and I *am* Your servant, and *that* I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You *are* the LORD God, and *that* You have turned their hearts back *to You* again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that *was* in the trench. Now when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He *is* God! The LORD, He *is* God!"



1 Kings 18:30-39

3. *The amount of faith is not as important as the object of your faith:*

And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

Luke 17:5,6

Q – It seems that the amount of faith is not that important. If this is true, why?

4. *Faith is shown by works, or in other words, by what we really do:*

So many of us feel that we are simply not good enough for God's favor and blessing. Actually, none of us are ever good enough to earn anything from God, but He is merciful, longsuffering and kind, giving us what we do not deserve.

Q – What does this statement really mean: "faith without works is dead?"

James 2:14-26

What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." And he was called the friend of God.

You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

5. *Faith is a gift from God, but it has to grow!*

When we become believers, God puts in us the desire to do His will, and then He gives us the ability to do it as well. It is then our responsibility to do the things that are necessary for our faith to grow. We must listen to His word and become close to those that can help us.

...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13

And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

John 6:65

So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:17

Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

Mark 4:24,25



Q – What has helped your faith to grow?

So, what does faith have to do with knowing God's will?

You cannot please God if you do not trust Him!

Heb 11:6 - But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

If you don't trust Him, you will lose patience and do what you think is best. We have an unfortunate example of this in the life of Saul, the first King of Israel. He, along with the people with him, were under the pressure of war and were afraid. They were instructed to wait for the prophet Samuel, who would present an offering to God and bring favour to them in battle. Saul did not trust God, was disobedient, and decided to bring his own offering:

1 Samuel 13:13,14

And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him *to be* commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

Without trusting Him, you will waver and become unstable

James 1:5-8

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Conclusion

So, here are the seven suggestions to help us to know the will of God:

1. ***Attitude***
2. ***Lifestyle***
3. ***Ask***
4. ***Confirmation***
5. ***Peace***
6. ***Patience***
7. ***Faith***

The next time that you are unsure of what God wants you to do, go over these points again and apply them to your circumstances. They should help you to hear His voice clearly and prevent you from worry.

The Holy Spirit and Prayer

Just before he was crucified, Jesus told his disciples that he was going to leave them. This was almost impossible for them to understand, as they could not imagine life without their master to guide, teach and direct them. Just like us, they needed help! How were they going to fulfil their call to serve without Jesus, their master, being with them? But at this most difficult time, Jesus promised not to leave them as orphans, but to send His Spirit to help them:



"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

John 14:15-18

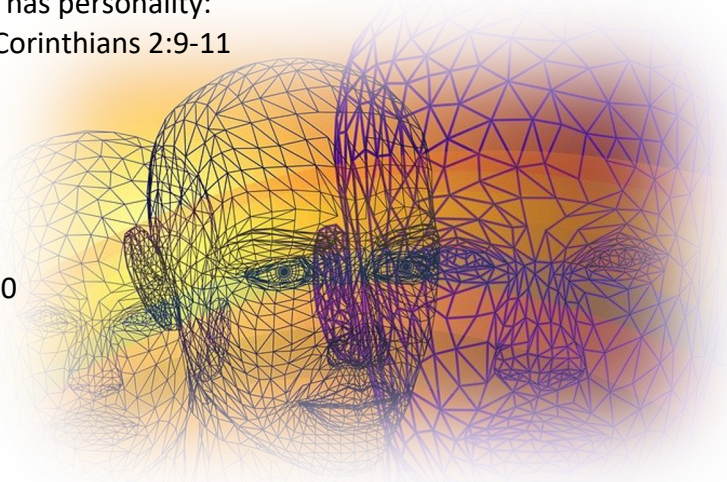
Like them, we also need the help of God's Spirit in order to fulfil our call to serve. But what do we really know about the Holy Spirit? Here are a few things that we should know about Him:

#1 - He is a person! The Holy Spirit is not a force, like electricity, or an element, like fire. He is a person!

Q – What is it that makes you a person?

These verses prove that the Holy Spirit has personality:

- He knows and understands— 1 Corinthians 2:9-11
- He wills – 1 Corinthians 12:11
- He thinks - Romans 8:27
- He loves – Romans 15:30
- He instructs – Nehemiah 9:20
- He grieves – Ephesians 4:30
- He searches – 1 Corinthians 2:10
- He speaks – Revelation 2:7
- He teaches – John 14:26
- He has power – Romans 15:13
- He has influence – 2 Peter 1:21



#2 - He is God! Paul uses our own experience to describe the Holy Spirit in his letter to the Corinthians:

But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

What he is saying is that in the same way that our spirit understands what we are thinking, even so the Spirit of God understands the things of God. Our spirit is separate, even though we are one. God's Spirit is separate, even though He is one.

Q – What is God like? Can you list and discuss some of the attributes of God?

These verses show that the Holy Spirit displays all the attributes of God:

- **Eternal** – no beginning and no end – Hebrews 9:14
- **Omnipotent** – all powerful – Matthew 12:28
- **Omnipresent** – everywhere at the same time – Psalm 139:7,8
- **Omniscience** – all knowing – 1 Corinthians 2:10
- **Love** – God is love – Romans 15:30
- **Faithful** – God is faithful – Galatians 5:22
- **Truthful** – God is truth – John 15:26
- **Holiness** – God is holy – Matthew 12:32

These verses show us the things that the Holy Spirit does:

1. He convicts us of sin (John 16:8)
2. He permanently indwells us (John 14:16-17)
3. He seals us (Ephesians 1:13)
4. He teaches us (John 14:26)
5. He guides us into all truth (John 16:13)
6. He reminds us (John 14:26)
7. He bears fruit through us (Galatians 5:22-23)
8. He comforts us (John 16:7)
9. He equips us with spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)
10. He fills us (Ephesians 5:18)
11. He empowers us (Acts 1:8)
12. He glorifies Jesus (John 16:14)
13. He helps us to pray (Romans 8:26,27)



#3 - We need Him!

Q - Why do we need the Holy Spirit to pray?

1. We need the Holy Spirit because we often do not know what to pray for:

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able."

Matthew 20:20-22

The disciples were asking for a position of authority and honor, but they really did not have a clue what this meant, or what they would have to become in order for it to happen.

Q – Do we sometimes ask for more than we can handle?

2. We need the Holy Spirit because we don't know how to pray:

Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, *that* one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Luke 11:1

The disciples knew that John had taught his disciples and wanted Jesus to do the same for them, because they simply did not know how to pray.



Q – Is it true that sometimes we just don't know how to pray?

3. We need the Holy Spirit because our motives are not always right:

Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

James 4:1-3

James gives us an example of some who are praying but not receiving what they are asking for, because their motives are wrong.

Q – Have you ever prayed with wrong motives?

What have we considered so far?

- The Holy Spirit is a person, with intellect, feelings and all of the other attributes of personality.
- The Holy Spirit is God, with all of the attributes of God attributed to Him.
- We need the Holy Spirit to help us to pray

In the next section, we will consider what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and Prayer (part 2)

Jesus told us that He would send the Holy Spirit to us to help us. In part 1 we looked at several things that are important to know about Him. We first recognised that He is a person who knows, loves, thinks, teaches, and even grieves. Then we looked at passages from scripture that showed that the Holy Spirit displays all the attributes of God. Next, we considered many of the things that He does for us and were reminded of how much we need Him. There are a few people in the bible who are said to have been “in the Spirit”:

David –

Mat 22:43 - He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'LORD,' saying:

Paul –

Act 19:21 - When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

Act 20:22 - And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

John –

Rev 1:10 - I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet

Rev 4:2 - Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne.

Jesus –

Luk 10:21 - In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

Joh 11:33 - Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.

As followers of Christ, we are told:

We are in the Spirit –

Rom 8:9 - But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Walk in the Spirit –

Gal 5:16 - I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.





Pray in the Spirit –

Eph 6:18 - praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

Q – What do you think it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Now we will consider a few words used about the Holy Spirit in the bible:

First, let's look at the word "**baptized**", which is the Greek word "*baptizō*" and means: to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk); to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe; to overwhelm. Here is an example of how Jesus used this word:

Mat 20:22- But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able."

Q – What did Jesus mean by the question He asked in verse 22?

Consider these next verses:

Mat 3:11- I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Act 1:5- for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Q – What is meant by "baptized with the Holy Spirit"?

Now we will look at the word "**received**". There are actually two different Greek words used in these two verses:

Act 8:14 - Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had **received** the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them...

The word "received" here is from the Greek word "*dechoma*", and means "accepted as true". We are told that the Samaritans accepted the message as a true message from God.

Act 8:15 - who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might **receive** the Holy Spirit.

The word “receive” in this verse is slightly different. It is the Greek word *lambanō* and means “taken in”, or “taken hold of”. They accepted the message as true, and afterwards they prayed that the Holy Spirit would take hold of them.

Act 10:47 - "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have*?"

Q – What does it mean to receive?

Here is another interesting word; “**fallen**”. This is the Greek word *epiptō*, and means “to embrace with affection”, or “to seize”. This word is only used 13 times in the New Testament.

Act 8:16 - For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Act 10:44 - While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

Act 20:37 - Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,

Q – What does this word make you think of when considering the Holy Spirit?

Now let us consider the word “**filled**”. This is the Greek word *plēthō*, meaning “to influence” or “to supply”.

We have a lot of examples of this word:

Luk 1:15 - For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

Luk 1:41 - And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Luk 1:67 - Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

Act 2:4 - And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.



Act 4:8 - Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

Act 4:31 - And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Act 9:17 - And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Act 13:9 - Then Saul, who also *is called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him

Act 13:52 - And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Here in Ephesians the word is slightly different. The Greek word is *plēroō*, which is a slight variation and means "to cram" or "to level up".

Eph 5:18, 19 - And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

Q – What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

The language of the bible tells us:

- Be baptized in the Spirit – immersed, submerged, cleansed, and washed.
- Receive the Holy Spirit – accept Him as true and ask Him to take hold of you.
- Let the Holy Spirit fall on you – let Him embrace you with affection and seize you.
- Be filled with the Holy Spirit – let Him influence you and supply you with all you need.

How do we know that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit? We will consider this question in part 3.

The Holy Spirit and Prayer (part 3)

Here is what we have considered so far. First, we saw that the Holy Spirit is not a force or energy as some say, but He is a person who feels, thinks, acts and possesses all the attributes of personality. We also concluded that He is God, and saw that the scriptures clearly teach that He is all powerful, all knowing, eternal and carries all other attributes of God. He was given to all believers to help us! As followers of Christ we are told that we are in the Spirit, must walk in the Spirit and even pray in the Spirit.



Next, we considered a few phrases used about the Holy Spirit in the bible. Believers were baptized in the Spirit, received the Spirit, were filled with the Spirit and the Spirit had fallen on them. Now we come to a very important question: how do we know if a person is filled with the Holy Spirit?

1. *By the works that they produce:*

- a. **Elizabeth and Zacharias** were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:41,42 - And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb!

Luke 1:67,68 - Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

"Blessed *is* the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited and redeemed His people...

Q – What were Elizabeth and Zacharias able to do through His prompting?

God filled them with His Spirit and they were able to speak His message to the people.

- b. **120 Disciples** were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:4-11 - And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans

and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

Q – What were the first disciples able to do as a result of being filled?

God filled them with His Spirit and they were able to speak about the wonderful works of God to the people in their own languages.

c. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:8-12 - Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED BY YOU BUILDERS, WHICH HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Q – What was Peter able to do by the direction of the Holy Spirit?

God filled Peter with His Spirit and he was able to testify and interpret the scriptures with boldness.

d. The disciples were once again filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:31 - And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Q – What did they do through the Holy Spirit?

So, we see that one of the ways that we know a person is filled with the Holy Spirit is by the works that they produce. However, even this can be deceiving. Notice what Jesus said at the end of the sermon on the mount:

Mat 7: 21-23 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

Q – How can a person do miracles and yet not truly belong to Christ? Is this possible?

Works are definitely an indication of God's Spirit working in a person, but earlier in the same address, here is what Jesus said about false prophets:

Mat 7:15-20 - "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore **by their fruits you will know them.**

Good works and even miracles may not necessarily mean that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit or even a child of God. God can speak through or use anyone at any time, and even uses us in our imperfect state to minister to others. So, what is the second way we know that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit?

2. *By the fruit that they produce:*

Jesus was very clear. The way that you really know whether a person is full of the Holy Spirit is by what they produce. In fact, the key to being full of the Spirit and doing the works of God is in walking in (or keeping in step with) the Spirit. Paul explained it this way:

Gal 5:16-25 - I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Here Paul gives a comparison of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Sooner or later, whatever is on the inside of a person will eventually come out. If a person is operating in the flesh, it will eventually be evident, obvious, clearly manifested and plain to see. Just like fruit, it eventually grows and shows you what kind of tree it is. In the same way, if a person is operating in the Spirit, it will also be evident, obvious, clearly manifested and plain to see.

How can I be filled with the Spirit? We will consider this question in part 4.

The Holy Spirit and Prayer (part 4)

The bible tells us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In these studies, we have explored the nature of the Holy Spirit and what He does, but how can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? There are four things that you must know that will help you to be filled with the Holy Spirit:

#1 – Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a gift that cannot be earned - being filled with the Holy Spirit is not something that we get as a result of our works of righteousness or good behaviour. The Holy Spirit has been promised to us to make us more like Jesus. We can do the works of God because God is at work in us!



Acts 2:28,39

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive **the gift** of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Act 10:44,45

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

Philippians 2:12,13

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

Q – Why do so many people feel that they must work to gain God's gifts and favour?

#2 – To be filled with the Holy Spirit I must ask – our God is very generous and gives good gifts to His children. In fact, the best gift that he has ever given is Himself! He gave Jesus, who died for us and He now gives His Spirit to live in us! But He does require one thing: we must ask for it!

Luke 11:9,10

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

John 7:37-39

On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the

Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Q – What does Jesus mean by this statement “...let him come to Me and drink.”?

#3 – I must trust God to fill me with His Spirit – it is clear that if we ask Him for anything good He promises to give it to us. But when we ask, we must trust God to do what He said He would do. This is what it means to ask in faith!



James 1:6-8

But let him **ask in faith**, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Luke 11:11-13

If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Q – If God says that He will fill us with His Spirit, what would cause us to doubt?

#4 – I must really want to be filled with His Spirit – the best example of this is in Acts 10 when the Italian centurion Cornelius sent for Peter after being instructed by God through a dream. When Peter came, this is what Cornelius said:

Acts 10:30-33

So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.' So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

He had done everything that God asked him to do, but look what it said about Cornelius before this:

Acts 10:24

And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.

It is clear that Cornelius really wanted whatever God had for him with great anticipation. He even called together his relatives and close friends, and this resulted in them all being filled with the Holy Spirit! We must follow his example of anticipation when we ask God to fill us with His Spirit.

Q – What would cause a person to not want to be filled with God's Spirit?

Summary:

Since being filled with the Holy Spirit is something that I cannot earn, I must simply ask Him to fill me and trust that He will do it.

Prayer & Spiritual Gifts (part 1)

As we continue in our series on prayer, why should we talk about spiritual gifts? Well, there has been much confusion about the use of spiritual gifts and prayer, particularly the use of the gift of tongues. Some have argued that tongues, and other spiritual gifts, are no longer in operation; while others insist that tongues are necessary for salvation. Are tongues from the devil? Should every believer speak in tongues? These same issues that we must deal with today were the same issues that the apostle Paul had to deal with among the believers in his day.



Paul dealt with the issues of spiritual gifts in his second letter to the church in the city of Corinth. We have no record of the first letter that he wrote to them, or of their reply, we do know by what he wrote to them that other letters existed (see 1 Corinthians 5:9; 2 Corinthians 2:4;7:8). Corinth was a city in Greece of great commerce, full of beautiful buildings, wealth, luxury and much idolatry. One of the most famous buildings was the temple of Venus, which had connected to it 1000 temple prostitutes. Obviously it was a very corrupt city! In fact, it was so corrupt that the phrase “to Corinthize” meant to act as a prostitute, and a Corinthian damsel meant a harlot or common woman³

The account of the birth of the church in Corinth is in Acts 18. Paul met a couple named Aquila and Priscilla and worked with them making tents while reasoning in the Jewish synagogue every Sabbath. Many became believers and Paul ended up staying there for a year and six months. There were many problems that he had to address, including the usage and abuse of spiritual gifts, which he deals with in chapters 12 -14. Let’s see what Paul make clear in these chapters:

1. ***Don’t be ignorant*** (Jesus is the centre of spiritual gifts)

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

Q – How do you know that someone is speaking by the Spirit of God in verse 3?

2. ***God is the giver of gifts for the good of all*** (they are not of our own will or choosing)

³ Adam Clarke commentary – preface to the first epistle to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

Q – What is the role of the the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in verses 4 to 6?

1 Corinthians 12:7

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*:

Q – What is the purpose of these gifts in verse 7?

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

...for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Q – Can you describe what these gifts are? Who determines how these gifts are distributed?

3. ***There is one body with many members*** (the body should not be divided)

1 Corinthians 12:12,13

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

Q – Why did he use the phrase “...whether Jews o f Greeks, whether slaves of free...?”

1 Corinthians 12:14-20

For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they *were* all one



member, where *would* the body *be*? But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body.

Q – what does he mean when he compares the foot to the hand and the ear to the eye?

1 Corinthians 12:21-26

And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our



unpresentable *parts* have greater modesty, but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

Q – What does he mean when he compares the eye to the hand and the head to the feet?

4. All are not the same (God gives us different gifts for different tasks)

1 Corinthians 12:27,28

Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

Q – Why does he mention apostles, prophets and teachers?

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

Q – Do all speak with tongues? Why is this put last?

At the end of this section he adds:

1 Corinthians 12:31

But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

We will see what he means in the next section.

Prayer & Spiritual Gifts (part 2)

Why have spiritual gifts caused so much confusion and even division among Christians? It seems that the same problems existed among early believers as well. In chapter 12, Paul wrote about 4 important things:

1. ***Don't be ignorant*** (Jesus is the centre of spiritual gifts)
2. ***God is the giver of gifts for the good of all*** (they are not of our own will or choosing)
3. ***There is one body with many members*** (the body should not be divided)
4. ***All are not the same*** (God gives us different gifts for different tasks)

At the very end of the chapter Paul tells us that we should desire spiritual gifts, but then he speaks of a “better way”, which is a better way to think and act. This is the way of love:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.



Here are several questions to consider:

1. **Tongues without love – why are they compared to sounding brass and clanging cymbals?**
2. **Prophecy, mysteries, knowledge and faith – why did he use these particular gifts to make a point?**
3. **Feeding the poor and becoming a martyr – what do these two have in common?**
4. **What is a simple message in this passage that Paul is trying to communicate here?**

In the middle of his explanation of spiritual gifts, Paul expresses the most important truth of all. Unless we are operating in love, we are nothing! In the next several verses, Paul gives us a simple yet profound description of what love is like:

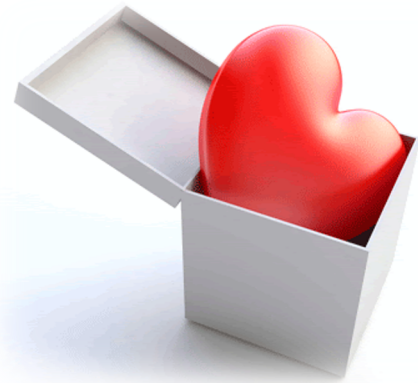
1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Q - Can you explain these attributes of love?

1. **Suffers long**

2. Kind
3. Does not envy
4. Does not parade itself
5. Not puffed up
6. Not rude
7. Does not seek its own
8. Not provoked
9. Thinks no evil
10. Does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in the truth
11. Bears all things
12. Believes all things
13. Hopes all things
14. Endures all things



The next few verses speak of the enduring quality of love:

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.

Here are a few more questions to consider:

1. When will prophecies, tongues and knowledge end?
2. Why, in the middle of these statements about love, does he refer to the example of his childhood?
3. He speaks of “now” and “then”. What does he mean?
4. Why is love greater than faith and hope?

This chapter has been and will continue to be read at weddings for years to come. Yet, even though the principles can be applied to marriage, the chapter has nothing to do with marriage. It is primarily to do with the usage of spiritual gifts. The main reason why there have been so many problems with this subject stems from our lack of love when dealing with them. Whenever we talk about or use spiritual gifts, let us be sure to be motivated by love.

Prayer & Spiritual Gifts (part 3)

Now Paul deals with the problems that they were facing with spiritual gifts and in particular, speaking in tongues and prophecy. Before we actually look at these verses there are a few things that are important to understand:

- **The questions** – Paul was responding to the questions that they had asked him concerning these things. By studying his answers we can better understand their circumstances and then apply them to our situation.
- **The culture** – Corinth was a sinful gentile city, filled with idolatry and sexual immorality. It is no wonder that they had very restrictive practices to do with modesty and proper worship, particularly to do with the actions of women.
- **The need for order** – we can tell by Paul's exhortations to them that their gatherings were very disorderly and sometimes even chaotic. Therefore, his instructions to them were to do with how they operated during their public services.



1

Corinthians 14:1-5

1 - Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 - For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. 3 - But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. 4 - He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. 5 - I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

Here are a few questions, based on these verses, to consider:

- What does it mean to “prophecy”?
- What is actually happening (verses 2 and 4) when a person speaks in tongues?
- What is the purpose (verse 3) of prophecy?
- Why is the person who prophesies greater than the one who speaks in tongues?

1 Corinthians 14:6-11

6 - But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? 7 - Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? 8 - For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will



prepare for battle? 9 - So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. 10 - There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them *is* without significance. 11 - Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks *will be* a foreigner to me.

Here are a few more questions to discuss:

- What is meant by revelation, knowledge, prophesying or teaching in verse 6?
- How does Paul compare the sound of an instrument to speaking in tongues?
- How does he compare (in verses 10 and 11) foreign languages to speaking in tongues?

In this next verse, Paul speaks of what should be the true motive for seeking spiritual gifts:

1 Corinthians 14:12

Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts*, *let it be* for the edification of the church *that* you seek to excel.

Q – What should be our motive for the usage of spiritual gifts?

In these next several verses notice that Paul uses himself as an example. He speaks of the difference between his “spirit” and his “understanding”.

1 Corinthians 14:13-19

13 - Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. 14 - For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 - What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. 16 - Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? 17 - For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

Q - Paul mentions 3 things that are done with his spirit. What are they?

This is the second time that Paul encourages them not to be childish:

18 - I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; 19 - yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. 20 - Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

Q – Is Paul against speaking in tongues?

Next, Paul explains that tongues are for a sign:

1 Corinthians 14:21-25

21 - In the law it is written: "WITH MEN OF OTHER TONGUES AND OTHER LIPS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE; AND YET, FOR ALL THAT, THEY WILL NOT HEAR ME," says the Lord. 22 - Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. 23 - Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those who are* uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 - But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. 25 - And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.



- In what way is speaking in tongues a sign to unbelievers?
- How is prophesying a sign to believers?

What have we concluded so far?

- When a person speaks in tongues he builds himself up, but the one who speaks prophetically builds up the church.
- In a public setting, it is much better to prophesy than to speak with tongues, unless there is an interpretation.
- Our motive for the use of spiritual gifts should be to build up others.
- The person who speaks in tongues is strengthened in his spirit but his understanding is unfruitful.
- Paul was never against speaking in tongues, but encouraged the wise usage of all spiritual gifts.
- Tongues is a sign of punishment and exclusion for unbelievers.
- Prophecy is a sign of inclusion and building up believers.

In part 4 we will consider orderly worship in the church.

Prayer & Spiritual Gifts (part 4)

In the earlier part of chapter 14, Paul deals specifically with the differences between speaking in tongues and prophecy. He told us that prophecy is better than speaking in tongues (unless there is someone to interpret), because it builds up others. Now, in the last several verses he teaches how their worship services should be done in an orderly manner.



1 Corinthians 14:16-40

26 - How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. 27 - If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be two or at the most three, each* in turn, and let one interpret. 28 - But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. 29 - Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. 30 - But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. 31 - For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. 32 - And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. 33 - For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Q – Paul wrote that “...each of you has a psalm...teaching...tongue...etc. What do you think was happening in their meetings?

Q – He mentions “...let there be two or at the most three...” Why do you think that he wrote this?

Q – He mentioned about judging prophecies. Why was there a need for this?

Q – What does he mean by “...the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.”?

Q – If God is not the author of confusion, where does confusion come from? (see James 3:13-16)

It is pretty clear by Paul's writing that there was a need for order in their meetings. What happens when one person feels that God is saying this and another that? There must be leaders who can discern what God is actually saying. What happens when several people have a prophetic word or a message through the gift of tongues? Wait for one another and look for an interpreter. Remember, all should be done in love so that all can learn and be encouraged.



Now we come to what has been a very divisive issue for many – can women speak in churches?

1 Corinthians 14:34-36

34 - Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says. 35 - And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church. 36 - Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached?

Q - Is this passage telling us the women are not ever allowed to speak or use the gift of prophecy?

If this were the case, what then would you say of these passages:



Acts 2:16,17

But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE LAST DAYS, SAYS GOD, THAT I WILL POUR OUT OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH; YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHESY, YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS.

Here it states that your daughters shall prophesy. We are told that Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, was a prophetess:

Luke 2:36,37

Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman *was* a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.

How could she be a prophetess if she was not allowed to speak? See also what was said about Philip's daughters:

Acts 21:8,9

On the next *day* we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

Once again, how could Philip's daughters be known this way if they could not speak? Earlier in the very same letter to the church in Corinth, Paul says this:

1 Corinthians 11:4,5

Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with *her* head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.

In this passage it is clear that women were allowed to pray or prophesy, but only with her head covered, as a means of respect for her husband. So what does all this mean? Remember that the main issue that Paul is dealing with is order in their public meetings. In the Jewish Synagogue, men would discuss and debate spiritual matters and ask questions. Here are a few examples of this in the New Testament:

- Jesus as a boy lingered at the synagogue asking questions -
Luk 2:46 - Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.
- Jesus was constantly challenged by religious leaders both in the synagogues and in the temple –
Joh 18:20 - Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing.
- Paul's regular custom was to go into the synagogues on the Sabbath and debate with the Jews-
Act 17:2 - Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,



Women were forbidden to do so. It was considered a great offence to a man if his wife or daughter would debate or ask questions in a public setting. Here is a quote from a theologian named Adam Clarke:

This was a Jewish ordinance; women were not permitted to teach in the assemblies, or even to ask questions. The rabbins taught that "a woman should know nothing but

the use of her distaff (spinning tool).” This was their condition till the time of the Gospel, when, according to the prediction of Joel, the Spirit of God was to be poured out on the women as well as the men, that they might prophesy, i.e. teach. And that they did prophesy or teach is evident from what the apostle says, 1Co 11:5, where he lays down rules to regulate this part of their conduct while ministering in the church.

But does not what the apostle says here contradict that statement, and show that the words in chap. 11 should be understood in another sense? For, here it is expressly said that they should keep silence in the church; for it was not permitted to a woman to speak. Both places seem perfectly consistent. It is evident from the context that the apostle refers here to asking questions, and what we call dictating in the assemblies. It was permitted to any man to ask questions, to object, altercate, attempt to refute, etc., in the synagogue; but this liberty was not allowed to any woman. St. Paul confirms this in reference also to the Christian Church; he orders them to keep silence; and, if they wished to learn any thing, let them inquire of their husbands at home; because it was perfectly indecorous for women to be contending with men in public assemblies, on points of doctrine, cases of conscience, etc. But this by no means intimated that when a woman received any particular influence from God to enable her to teach, that she was not to obey that influence; on the contrary, she was to obey it, and the apostle lays down directions in chap. 11 for regulating her personal appearance when thus employed. All that the apostle opposes here is their questioning, finding fault, disputing, etc., in the Christian Church, as the Jewish men were permitted to do in their synagogues;

And what about this business of head covering? In what way was it a shame for a woman to pray with some kind of symbol of authority on her head? Unlike today, it was a custom, both among the Greeks, and Romans, and even a law among the Jews, that no woman should be seen in public without a veil. This is still a custom in many eastern cultures, and among the inhabitants of Corinth. Only public prostitutes would be in public without a veil. Therefore, if a woman prayed or even appeared without a veil, she would dishonor her head, which is her husband.

But what does this mean for us today? Here are a few things to consider:

1. We don't have the type of worship service as they had today, so there are no times when anyone would argue, dispute or ask questions during a public meeting.
2. We certainly don't have the custom of the wearing of veils or the shaving of the head of a prostitute, so this does not directly apply to us.
3. However, the principle of submission and authority are important lessons to learn from this. Husbands are still the heads of their homes and should be the main source of teaching and leadership in spiritual matters. How can a woman learn at home if the man knows nothing?



Here is Paul's final summary:

37 - If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. 38 - But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. 39 - Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. 40 - Let all things be done decently and in order.

His conclusions:

1. Recognize that what he wrote are the Lord's commandments
2. Desire earnestly to prophesy
3. Do not forbid to speak with tongues
4. Use the gifts in a decent and orderly manner

Clichés in Prayer – What Do We Mean? (part 1)

There are a lot of phrases and statements that, in certain Christian circles, are common expressions of prayer. But what do we mean by these statements, and in particular, are they based on scripture? Here are 7 such phrases that we are going to consider:

- “I plead the blood!”
- “I’m believing God for...”
- “By His stripes, you are healed”
- “I can do all things through Christ”
- “Thus sayeth the LORD”
- “I claim it!”
- “I prophesy it!”



Wait a minute! Are you suggesting that these statements are wrong? In fact, some of them are actually scripture! This is not necessarily an issue of right versus wrong, but more a matter to seriously consider. What do you mean when you make these statements? Here are four dangers to be careful of:

1. **Adding to scripture** – we must be careful not to add things that are not principally taught in God’s word. At the very end of the bible, we are warned about adding to the prophecies in the book of Revelation, which can also be applied to the entire book:

Revelation 22:18,19

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

Some things may appear to be harmless, but If we are not careful can lead us into false doctrine:

1 Timothy 4:1

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...

2. **Selfishness** – for some, phrases like these become a formula to get whatever is wanted. “I prophecy that this will happen”, or “I claim this...”, these are sometimes though to be the key to getting God to work and are even taught as such:

1 Timothy 6:3-5

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling,

evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that **godliness is a means of gain**. From such withdraw yourself.

3. **Disappointment** – when we put our faith in something that is not true or not God's will, we can become greatly discouraged when the thing that we want is delayed or does not come to pass:

Proverbs 13:12

Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
But *when* the desire comes, *it is* a tree of life.

4. **Relationship issues** - God is not a robot, but a person who is greater than us and should be treated as such. Using clichés, gimmicks, or formulas can alter our thinking toward God. If we are not careful, we may begin to think of Him as something that works instead of someone who is far wiser than us and cares for us:

Isaiah 55:8,9

"For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts,
Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD.
"For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

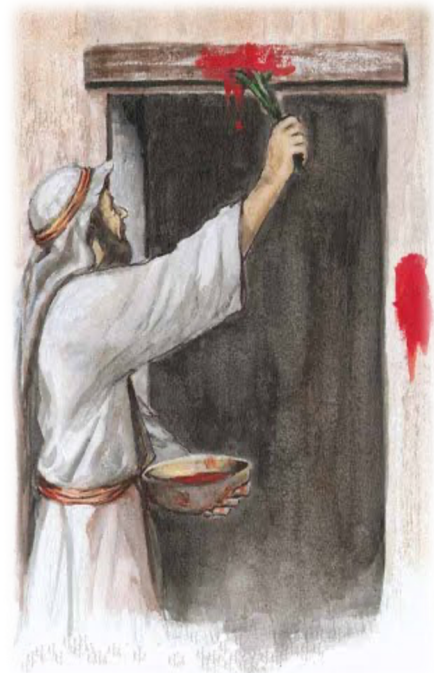
So now we are going to look at these 7 "phrases" or "statements" that are commonly used by many Christians in prayer:

#1 - "I plead the blood" –

This is a type of phrase that has been used in many forms, particularly when some are praying against the "works" of the devil. Here are a few questions to consider:

- Q – What does one mean when saying this?
- Q – What is the scriptural basis for this?
- Q – Are there any examples of believers praying this way?
- Q – Did the apostles teach others to pray using such language?

There is much to say in scripture about blood. Most of the Old Testament sacrifices were made through blood, and there were covenants that were made through blood. Probably the most significant of these was in Exodus 12 when the LORD destroyed the firstborn of every male in Egypt. The children of Israel were commanded to kill a lamb and sprinkle the blood on the two doorposts and the lintel of their homes. The LORD passed through and struck the Egyptians, but passed over every household that had the blood on the



doorposts. All of these were pictures that pointed us to Jesus Christ, who was the lamb of God who, through His blood, took away our sins.

In the book of revelation, chapter 12, it speaks of war in heaven with the Devil being cast to the earth. This is what was said after the Devil was removed from heaven:

Revelation 12:10,11

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

This passage speaks of the victory of believers through the sacrifice of the cross and is often used as a scriptural basis of using the blood of Jesus against the devil in prayer. However, this verse does not suggest that we use the blood of Jesus as a tool to pray against the devil. We overcome the accusations of the devil because we are redeemed by the blood of the lamb. This is made very clear in Paul's letter to the Romans:

Romans 8:31-33

What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who **shall bring a charge** against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies.



The bible teaches that we have life through His blood (John 6:53), we were brought near by His blood (Ephesians 2:13), we enter God's presence by His blood (Hebrews 10:19), we are washed in His blood (Revelation 1:5), we are cleansed by His blood (1 John 1:7) and that Jesus is the Mediator of our covenant with God through His blood. It is through the blood of Christ that we have been saved from our sins. However, there is nowhere in scripture where believers used the blood of Christ as a form of prayer. We are never told to plead the

blood, cover anyone in the blood, or even to use the blood against the devil. This was never a practice in the bible.

#2 - "I am believing God for..."

Once again, this may not sound like much and in some ways it may not be a problem, but it depends on the answer to these questions:

Q – What is meant by this phrase?

Q – What is the scriptural basis for this?

Q – Are there examples of believers praying this way?

Q – Did the Jesus teach others to pray like this?

The biggest question with this phrase is all to do with what is meant by it. Usually the problem here is that somehow we have been led to understand that if we believe something strongly enough, our faith will cause it to come to pass. But there is one serious problem here: often we are “believing God” for something that He has not sanctioned or told us that we can have.

When God makes it clear that we can have something or when He promises to do something, we must stand firm, believing that it will come to pass. We see this often in the bible – Abraham believed God and received what God had promised him. Moses believed God and was used to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt. The bible even states that we must have faith and that if we believe, we will receive:



Mark 11:22-24

Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*."

However, this is not a licence for whatever we want. Jesus was speaking of anything that had to do with their service to God. It had to be in accordance with the will of God:

1 John 5:14,15

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

So what do we mean when we say “I am believing God for this or that”? If God has given some clear indication that He will act on our behalf or do something, then we can say plainly that we are waiting for Him to fulfil His promise. But we should not simply make a statement that we are “believing God” for something that He has not promised or confirmed. This is called presumption. If your son asked you for a computer for Christmas and then spoke as if it was coming before you made a promise to give it to him, how would you feel?

#3 – By His stripes, you are healed

This is a tricky one, since it comes directly from a verse in scripture:

Isaiah 53:5

But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.



The last part of this passage is often quoted when praying for those who are sick, and the suggestion is that Jesus died to take away all of our sicknesses. Therefore, we can claim this promise based on this verse. Once again, we need to consider these questions:

Q – Is this what is meant by this passage?

Q – Is this what is stated in other passages in the bible?

Q – Are there examples of other believers using this passage in prayer?

Q – Did Jesus teach His disciples to pray this way?

The real issue is in rightly interpreting this passage of scripture. Some suggest that when Jesus died on the cross, His death freed us from the curse and effects of sin, so if we believe we will always be healed of our diseases.

They say that the plan of God is for “divine health” and that we should “claim” our healing over sickness. However, there are several problems with this doctrine:

1. **The passage is dealing with sin, not physical healing.** Peter quoted this passage and made it clear that it was speaking about our sins and not our sicknesses:

1 Peter 2:24,25

...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

2. **Sickness remained with many believers after Jesus died on the cross.** If they had divine healing, why were they sick?

Epaphroditus was sick:

Philippians 2:25-27

Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Trophimus was sick:

2 Timothy 4:20

Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.

Even Paul had a “thorn in his flesh”:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

3. **We are told to pray for believers who are sick.** This would not be the case if they taught divine healing:

James 5:15

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

4. **The last enemy is death.** This means that sickness and death will only end when Jesus returns. Even though we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, until Jesus returns we will all die. Sickness and death are the consequence of the original sin of Adam and will end with the second coming of Jesus:

1 Corinthians 15:25,26

For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death.

1 Corinthians 15:10-57

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY." "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O HADES, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?" The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have many examples of healing through the power of God and the name of Jesus in the New Testament, and we know that God does heal and even encourages us to pray for healing. But to take these verses out of their context and use them to forge a new doctrine is very dangerous indeed.

Clichés in Prayer – What Do We Mean? (part 2)

So far, we have looked at three statements and have questioned what we really mean when we use them. They are:

1. “I plead the blood...”
2. “I am believing God for...”
3. “By His stripes we are healed...”

These are already controversial enough, but now we will consider one that may be even more puzzling:

#4 - “I can do all things through Christ...”

Come on now, surely there can be nothing wrong with this statement. I even have the t-shirt! After all, it is actually a verse in the bible! Yes, it is true that this is part of a verse in scripture, but here is an area in which we must be very, very careful. It is important to quote scripture based on the “context” in which it was meant. It is very easy to make a verse say something that it was not actually intended to say, and then to form a doctrine around it. So, let’s ask the same questions with this statement that we asked with the previous statements:



Q – What did the writer want us to understand with this phrase?

Q – Are there other places in the bible that say the same thing or teach the same idea?

Q – Are we encouraged to pray with this idea in mind?

What is the problem with saying “I can do all things through Christ” in prayer? Nothing, unless it is use in the wrong context. Let us first consider what Paul was writing about: First, he was rejoicing in the fact that after a long time, they were able to give him financial assistance:

Philippians 4:10

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.

Next, he explained that he did not say this because he was in need, because he had learned to be content in whatever circumstances that he faced:

Philippians 4:11,12

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

With this in mind he wrote:

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

He meant that Christ gives him the grace to handle abundance and to suffer need. Whatever his circumstances, he can handle it through Christ. Unfortunately, this verse has been turned into something quite different by many. Some use this as a promise from God in prayer to do pretty much whatever they want, saying "I can do all things through Christ!" Do you want to start a business? I can do all things through Christ. Do you want to sing or play an instrument? I can do all things through Christ. Do you want to be an athletic? I can do all things through Christ.



Is this a problem? Yes! Although the world may say otherwise, the truth of the matter is that we cannot just do what we want. We are taught in scripture that there is a right way in which we should think of ourselves:

Romans 12:3

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

As we learned in our earlier study of spiritual gifts, God determines our gifting and the way that we should use them. Our task is to discover that which God wants us to do and then submit to His will instead of our own. When we think of ourselves more highly that we should, we set ourselves on a road that can lead to trouble, failure and disappointment:

Galatians 6:3

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Philippians 2:3,4

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

We may even find ourselves fighting against God:

1 Peter 5:5

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

When we use a verse in a way that was not intended, we open ourselves up to failure, disappointment and can even find ourselves doubting the reality of God.

#5 – “Thus saith the Lord...”

This is a phrase (written in King James type English) that is almost always associated with some prophetic utterance. It is found one way or another in over 400 bible verses, but only in the Old Testament. Usually, when a prophet had a message from God, this is what that prophet would say. So what we are really talking about is prophecy.

Q - Have you ever heard anyone use this phrase, and if so in what context?

Q - What is usually meant when this phrase is used?

Q - How can this ever be a problem?



Whenever this phrase is used in the bible, the person is claiming that their message is from God. Most of the time this statement came from a person who was established as a prophet and had a very clear message from God. However, there are some instances when this came from a false prophet. One of the most remarkable of these is found in the book of 1 Kings, when the Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah made an alliance with Ahab, the king of Israel. Ahab was about to go to a place called Ramoth Gilead to fight against the Syrian army, and Jehoshaphat agreed to go with him, along with his army. Although Jehoshaphat worshipped the true God, Ahab and his entire nation had fallen into idolatry. We pick up the account as Jehoshaphat asks Ahab to enquire of God:

1 Kings 22:5-28

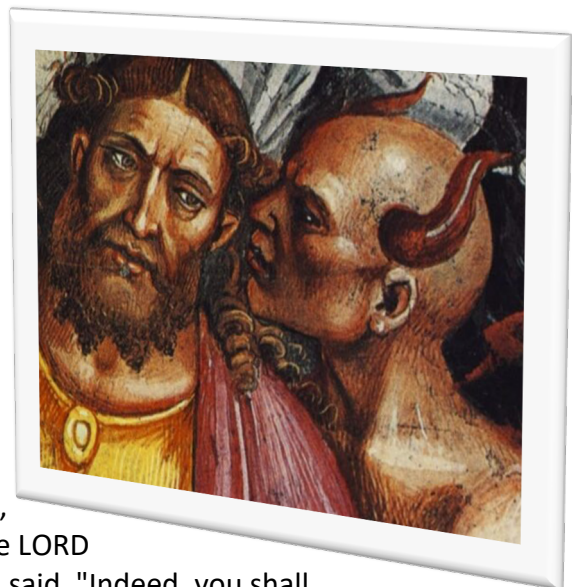
Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the LORD today." Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?" So they said, "Go up, for the Lord will deliver *it* into the hand of the king." And Jehoshaphat said, "*Is there* not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?" So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "*There is* still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!" Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imlah quickly!"

The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on *their* robes, sat each on his throne, at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.' " And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver *it* into the king's hand."

Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, "Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement." And Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak."

Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?" And he answered him, "Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver *it* into the hand of the king!" So the king said to him, "How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?" Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.' " And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

Then *Micaiah* said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade *him*, and also prevail. Go out and do so. 'Therefore look! The LORD put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.'



Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?" And Micaiah said, "Indeed, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!" So the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; and say, 'Thus says the king: "Put this *fellow* in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace." ' " But Micaiah said, "If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Take heed, all you people!"

Notice that there are several prophets that are adamant that God is speaking through them, yet they are false prophets. Yet there is only one man who stood on behalf of the true God and spoke the truth. The phrase "thus says the Lord" is used over 1900 in the Old Testament, yet it is never used in the New Testament. Here are a few things that we can learn from this:

There were false prophets then, and there will be false prophets today.

2 Peter 2:1-3

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

It is important to consider the source of the prophetic word. In other words, what is the character of the person that is speaking and who do they claim to represent?

Matthew 7:15-17

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

1 John 4:1-3

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.



In the New Testament, we are encouraged to put all prophetic words to the test:

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.

1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

So the thing to remember is this: just because a person uses the phrase "thus saith the Lord", or claims to be a prophet does not mean that we simply accept whatever they say.