



All we think or feel about God gets expressed in our prayers. We pray because we have needs. We pray because it brings us into a deeper union with our Father. We pray because we are allowed to play a role in Kingdom work.

Scripture offers several considerations to be taken into account if we are to offer God the kind of prayer He desires. As a group, read through the list below (taken from Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* text), look up the scriptures and discuss the points listed. Consider how you might apply them to your prayer life.

- **Praying According to God's Will** (1 John 5:14-15, Matthew 6:10, Matthew 26:39)
 - His will is that His word be obeyed and commands kept. Therefore, a knowledge of scripture, His commands and promises are critical to the believer (1 John 2:5-6). When we know His word, it's easier to automatically know His will.
 - When God's will isn't so clear, we can pray for what seems best to us but have a heart posture of "Nevertheless, if I am wrong in asking this, and if this is not pleasing to you, then do as seems best in your sight" or "if it is your will."
 - Sometimes, God will simply grant what we ask. Sometimes, He will give us deeper understanding or change our hearts so we ask differently. Sometimes, He will not grant our request at all and desire for us to submit to His will (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).
 - If we lack wisdom about His will, we can pray and ask for more insight (James 1:5-8).

- **Praying with Faith** (Mark 11:24, Matthew 21:22, James 1:6)
 - This type of faith is quiet, confident, consistent and willing to wait for as long as it takes. As we pray and wait, God will provide an assurance that He is working out His will even if it isn't the desired result we want.
 - This type of faith is one that trusts and believes in spite of what can't be seen (Hebrews 11:1).
 - Continual faithful prayer that doesn't give up (Luke 18:1-8, 2 Corinthians 12:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

- **Obedient Heart** (Proverbs 15:8 & 29, 1 Peter 3:7 & 12, 1 John 3:21-22)
 - Prayer and holy living go together (James 4:4-10). We do not obligate God based on our good behavior, but God desires to bless obedience.
 - Unconfessed sin can impact the effectiveness of our prayers (1 John 1:9, James 5:16). It's also appropriate to take the posture of David when he prayed "clear me from hidden faults" (Psalm 19:12). Sometimes forgotten or unknown sin can be a hindrance.
 - A lack of forgiveness can also impact the effectiveness of our prayers (Matthew 6:14-15, Mark 11:25). God desires for us to receive and offer forgiveness freely as modeled in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:12).

- **Humble Heart** (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5)
 - God opposes the proud and shows favor to those who are humble. A prideful heart is the opposite of a heart that is submissive and surrendered (Luke 18:9-14).

- **Praying in Private** (Daniel 6:10, Matthew 6:6)
 - In the private, secret presence of God, we can pour out our hearts and avoid the appearance of hypocrisy (Matthew 6:5).

- **Praying with Others** (Matthew 18:19-20)
 - There is strength in praying together and for one another. In prayer we can share one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).

- **Navigating Unanswered Prayers**
 - Unanswered prayer can be confusing and disorienting. When we face unanswered prayer, we join the company of Jesus in Luke 22:42, the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 and David in 2 Samuel 12:20-23.
 - When prayer remains unanswered, we must continue to trust God knowing He cares for us and will provide strength for each day. We must also continue to pray. Sometimes, answers take a long time, just like Simeon who waited to see the Messiah (Luke 2:25-35). Sometimes, prayers remain unanswered in this life. At times, God answers prayers after a believer dies. Other times, He may not. Regardless, the faith expressed in those prayers and the heartfelt expressions of love toward God are pleasing to Him and transformative for our own hearts.



In his book *Praying the Bible*, Donald Whitney gives us a simple prayer method that has the potential to transform your prayer time. Donald says, "To pray the Bible, you simply go through the passage line by line, talking to God about whatever comes to mind as you read the text." It's ok if what jumps into your mind doesn't match the context of the verse. Pray anyway, and move to the next verse. If a verse doesn't generate any thoughts or seems confusing, just keep reading until the next thought worth praying for shows up. Simple.

Here's an example. As I read through Galatians 5:1, here's how my thoughts and prayers might flow (verse in bold, and my thoughts in italics).

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. *Father, thank you for my freedom not only in Jesus but my country. Thank you for being able to worship you without fear of persecution. I pray for those who are being persecuted all around the world. Please strengthen them and remind them they are not alone and you love them deeply.*

Stand firm, then, *Father I think of my children who are constantly surrounded by temptation to do wrong. Please help them stand firm to what they know is right. Please help them resist the devil when he comes at them with deceptive, enticing desires. Please strengthen their spirits, and help them love you more than anything else.*

and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. *Father, there is so much slavery still in the world through sex trafficking and slave labor. Please continue to raise up believers who will fight for those who have no voice. Also, as I face everyday opportunities to be enslaved to my job, family, identity and addictions, please help me stay focused on you. Please help me not give in to anything that would enslave my heart or mind and take my focus off of living completely surrendered and abandoned for you!*

Take the next 10 minutes alone, and pray your way through Colossians 1:1-14 using Donald Whitney's method. Once your 10 minutes are up, come back to your tables and share with the group what you experienced. Once you are done discussing your experiences, share some needs and spend the last few minutes praying for one another.