



Do You REALLY Believe What You Say About Prayer?

Theoretical beliefs can be stated in “what you say,” but true beliefs are revealed in “what you do.” If you desire to grow in Christ, then an honest evaluation of what you truly believe can be made in the context of “words” and “actions.”

See [*What Do You Believe ... No, Really*](#)

If you are a professing believer in Christ, you have probably mentioned the importance of prayer and its necessity for growth in Christ, God-honoring relationships, and effective ministry. You may know the various aspects of prayer such as worshipping God, confessing sin, giving thanks, petitioning the Lord to answer specific needs, praising God, and asking the Lord to help others. You may have reported answers to prayer in which the Lord’s provision was beyond expectations. You may also have a habit of encouraging others to pray, especially in great trials of life.

With your stated beliefs about prayer in mind, take a few minutes to examine your prayer practices and perspectives. The questions that follow are measureable specifics with regard to your prayer life. These questions, however, are not meant to describe how you can “measure up” to God by good works. Each of us can observe what is visible, but God accurately sees one’s inner spiritual condition. As 1 Samuel 16:7 reminds us, “... the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

Before reviewing the questions, hopefully you have placed your faith in Jesus for God’s forgiveness of sin and, as a result, desire to grow in Christ. If so, your answers should help you realize how prayer can be integral to everyday life as you reaffirm your love for Christ and acknowledge your dependency on Him.

- Is prayer as consistent and needful for you (spiritually) as eating is (physically)?
- Do you set aside times to pray in order to communicate with the Lord with as much commitment as you set aside time to meet with a friend or to enjoy a favorite activity?
- Do you encourage others to pray and, when possible, pray with friends, family members, fellow believers, and those in obvious need?
- Do you interrupt your discretionary plans and activities to pray about others’ needs that are brought to your attention?
- Do you pray to grow in grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness in order to more accurately demonstrate the difference Jesus has made in your life?
- Do you pray often for the Christ-like development of fellow believers?
- Do you pray for your church leaders to remain faithful to Christ and God’s Word?
- Do you pray for those in authority in various aspects of life and, especially, pray for these leaders to commit their lives to Christ?
- Do you pray faithfully for believers who minister with high visibility and also for those who minister in relative obscurity, often in other cultures?
- Do you pray for children who are victimized by self-centered, lust-oriented predators?
- Do you pray for the millions of women who abort their babies? At the other end of the parent/child spectrum, do you pray for orphans and those who care for them?
- Do you pray for married couples who profess faith in Christ to demonstrate their commitment to Jesus through their marriage relationship?
- Do you pray for believing widows and widowers to draw closer Christ as they deal with the loss of a companion?

- Do you pray for marriage partners who divorce and especially pray for the children impacted by this disintegration?
- Do you pray for the people who have been forcibly entrapped in the human trafficking trade or are outcasts in their own societies?
- Do you pray for fellow believers in the world who are persecuted for their faith in Christ?
- Do you pray for people who hunger or are homeless?
- Do you pray for members of the armed forces and local law enforcement?
- Do you use news reports to alert you of people and situations for which you can pray?
- Do you pray for those who treat you cruelly and also pray for those who respond publicly to others in an unloving manner?
- Do you pray specifically for friends and family members who need God’s gift of salvation and eternal life?
- Do you pray for people around the world to hear the Good News of Christ and to respond obediently to faith in Jesus?
- Do you ask the Lord to give you opportunities to share the Good News of Christ with others and to tell others of the differences Jesus has made in your life?
- Do you regularly pray with the purpose of confessing personal sins to the Lord?
- Do you pray for the Lord’s help in identifying and putting off your sinful speech, thoughts, and actions in order to begin and develop more Christ-like characteristics by God’s grace?
- Do you pray before, during, and after every significant decision of life?
- Do you pray throughout the days in which there are *no* great difficulties in your life?
- Do you pray for your understanding of Scripture to increase as you read and study the Word?
- Do you often rejoice and give thanks to the Lord for His sovereign care, mercy and strength in your life?
- Do you pray for wisdom and resources to respond to observable needs that those in your home, workplace, neighborhood, community, nation, and other countries have?

These representative questions may seem overwhelming, but they demonstrate the vast arena in which prayer can be focused and can also reveal whether or not your prayer habits mirror your stated beliefs about prayer. If you answer “yes” in response to many of the questions, give thanks to the Lord and continue to grow in His grace. As maturing believers realize, there is always more to learn with regard to the power, necessity, and practice of prayer. Perfection is not the issue, but progress certainly is.

There is a danger, however, of comparing your prayer life to a “subject list” rather than to specific aspects of prayer mentioned in God’s Word. The danger is to think that if you are doing well according to a prayer need list, then you might conclude that you are “good to go.” The foundation of prayer, however, is not based on working through a list but, instead, rests on your relationship with your Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. The more you are attuned to His will as revealed in Scripture, the more your prayer life will mature.

One astute observer of personal prayer said, “I don’t think it is as important what I pray for as ‘how’ I am praying. Lists tend to put me on a guilt trip, since my prayer life can always improve until the day I die. I do keep a prayer request list to remind me of on-going prayer needs. I have discovered, however, that the more I respond each day in loving obedience to God’s Word, the more I am aware of the Lord’s presence and His leading me to pray. Prayer is all about my relationship with my Savior, Jesus Christ.”

If prayer is anemic in your daily life, you can change that characteristic as well as any other detriment to your spiritual growth in Christ.

See [*You Can Change ... One Step at a Time*](#)

The Lord will help you begin and maintain a practice of prayer that is integral to everyday life. This change often begins with ... prayer.

See [*A Prayer Pattern to Help Structure Your Life*](#)

What if, however, you make *no* sustained effort to change your prayer habits after recognizing that prayer is not part of your everyday life? If that is your response, then your foundation for everyday life is composed of a reliance on “self” and human wisdom, both of which inhibit Christ-like development.

See [*Prayerlessness: A Reflection of Self-Centeredness*](#)

See also [*Christ Crucified: A Solution to Self-Dependency*](#)

The spiritually devastating reality of self-centered living is fostered by “ignorance” (not knowing what to do) and/or “disobedience” (knowing what to do but not doing it). For believers in Christ, both of these hindrances can be overcome by loving obedience to God’s Word out of thankfulness for God’s grace and mercy demonstrated through Jesus.

See [*Your Way or God’s Way ... Your Choice*](#)

A CHRIST-HONORING PRAYER LIFE

Hopefully, out of a desire to grow in Christ, you will sense a corresponding desire to communicate with your loving Heavenly Father through prayer.

Consider the following suggestions for your prayer life to become more consistent and meaningful as a result of your desire to grow closer to Christ.

- Confess your sin(s) daily to the Lord.
- Faithfully thank the Lord for who He is, what He has done, and what He continues to do.
- Pray before you read the Bible each day and ask the Lord to help you apply His truth to your life.
- Set aside specific times to pray daily and take advantage of brief prayer moments that are available throughout every day.
- Pray for your non-Christian friends and family members to respond in faith to Christ.
- Look for opportunities to pray while you are involved with other daily activities (for example: pray while cooking, cleaning, bathing, dressing, resting, walking, shopping, exercising, etc.).
- Pray for those who teach the Word of God and for yourself and other listeners to respond obediently to divine truth.
- Maintain a list of prayer requests and record answers to prayer for purposes of giving thanks to God and as a testimony to others.
- Contact friends and family and ask about needs in their lives for which you can pray.
- Ask fellow believers to pray with and for you with regard to specific needs in your life.
- Use news reports to pray for needs locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Pray before scheduled meetings you may have or before any other relational interactions that are planned.
- Pray for those who persecute or abuse you or who consider themselves your enemies.
- Pray for leaders in every capacity, especially those in churches, in missionary endeavors, in the military, in education, and in governmental positions.
- Pray regularly for your boss/supervisor and co-workers.
- If you are married, pray often for your marriage companion to honor Christ in all aspects of life.
- If you are a parent, pray for your offspring daily, especially with regard to living for Jesus and loving others.
- If you are divorced, pray regularly for all those impacted by this situation, including yourself.
- If you are single, pray for wisdom to remain single or for God to provide a Christ-honoring marriage companion.
- Pray before you minister to others, and pray for fellow believers to minister faithfully for the glory of God.
- Encourage others to set aside time for prayer, both individually and with others, and arrange for times to pray

together periodically.

- As you read the Bible, notice the many prayers in its pages and use them as prayer patterns for yourself as well as for personal encouragement.

Since prayer is integral to Christ-like development, all matters pertaining to prayer are revealed in God's Word. The following verses are certainly not an exhaustive list, but they indicate the completeness that Scripture provides with regard to praying for others, just one aspect of a Christ-honoring prayer life

PRAYING FOR OTHERS

1 Samuel 12:23a, Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you ...

Matthew 5:44, "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"

Luke 6:28, "bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you."

Colossians 1:3-5, We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,

Colossians 1:9-10, And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Ephesians 6:18, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

2 Thessalonians 1:11, To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power,

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

1 Timothy 2:1-2, First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

James 5:16, Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION FOR PRAYER THAT MATTERS

If prayer needs to become more a way of life instead of an "every now and then" event, you will find great benefit from a biblical study on prayer. Consider the following ideas:

Whenever you read Scripture, mark verses that deal with prayer . . . perhaps by putting a "P" in the margin. Whenever you return to that portion of Scripture, your "prayer emphasis" verses can be easily recognized and reviewed.

If you have access to a computer that connects to the internet, go to a Bible study site (for example: <http://www.biblegateway.com> or <http://www.biblestudytools.com>), choose a Bible version, and do a search for "pray" or "pray for" or "prayer" as a starting point. The verses in which your search words are mentioned will enlarge your understanding of Scripture and can assist the on-going development of your prayer life.

You can enlarge your study on prayer by referencing other words in Scripture associated with prayer such as thanksgiving, praise, call, cry, worship, lift up, or confession. Verses that contain these words typically lead you to other verses that provide further explanation and encouragement.

Consider a personalized prayer notebook in which you can record verse references and corresponding text along with your thoughts or specific responses to those passages of Scripture.

If you have access to a Bible dictionary (in print or on the internet), do a word study on "prayer" and look up the referenced verses in order to know the context in which prayer was mentioned. You can also use a Bible concordance for the same purpose.

You can be a part of a small group of believers dedicated to helping one another grow in Christ by a greater understanding of prayer and its daily practice. Each believer could use the evaluation questions earlier in this article or

practical study aids in this section to encourage one another to make prayer a “way of life.” Periodic meetings to discuss scripturally based insights into prayer, in addition to praying together, could also make this group a true “prayer group.”

SUMMING UP

Believers who are growing in Christ never look at prayer as a “chore” or an “item on a daily check list.” Instead, prayer is the awesome privilege of communicating with the God of the universe on every matter that crosses our lives or the lives of others. May we believers take daily advantage of this opportunity for divine communion, the pinnacle avenue by which thoughts and words can be used for personal benefit and the welfare of others so that God is glorified.