



Praying Scripture

“For the word of God is living and active. . . .” —Hebrews 4:12, NIV
“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” —James 5:16, NIV

When you pray, do you ever wonder if you’re “doing it right”? You are not alone. Even the disciples, who had spent much time with the Lord, asked Jesus to teach them to pray. When we look at the life of Christ, we see a man whose relationship with the Father infused everything He did (John 5:19-20). Jesus’ prayer life was dynamic and creative. He prayed early; He prayed late. He prayed when He was busy, when He had big decisions to make, after performing miracles, and when He was full of sorrow¹. He seemed to find a compass and a comfort through conversation with the Father. He didn’t spend every moment alone with God, but He did spend every moment with God.

At times prayer may be perplexing or rote for followers of Christ. Yet, as we gaze at the glory of Christ, we will become more like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). One benefit of praying Scripture is that it gives us an accurate lens through which to see Christ. This alone will enrich our conversations with God. It is also the way we hear from God in a two-way conversation. How? Using the Bible as a guide provides fresh language for prayer. As we pray God’s Word, we can have confidence God is hearing and answering, because we have greater confidence we are praying within His will (1 John 5:14-15).

Praying Scripture acknowledges the preeminence of the Bible as God’s revealed Word, and expresses faith that it has power to judge the thoughts and intentions of our hearts². Praying through Scripture with a teachable, humble heart can remove roadblocks to answered prayer such as unforgiveness, lack of faith in God, wrong motives, or sin in our lives. As we read God’s Word and talk to Him about it, His Spirit will guide us in prayer.

Yet even while we can gain so much from praying Scripture, the specific words we speak are less important than the heart with which they are spoken. As John Bunyan said, it is better for our heart to be without words than our words to be without heart. What a comfort to know that in those times when we are in such distress or grief we cannot even frame words to express our need, the Holy Spirit is interceding on our behalf in accordance with God’s will (Romans 8:26).

We hope this resource enriches your prayer life by providing ideas to incorporate God’s Word in your prayers. To study more about prayer, see the Stonecroft Bible Study *Connecting with God: A Guide to Prayer*.

¹ Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12-13, Matthew 14:23, John 12:27-28

² Hebrews 4:12

Daily Study – Daily Inspiration to Pray

As you read and study the Bible each day, notice verses that inspire praise or prayer. Use them to praise God. Let them inspire prayer for others and yourself throughout the day. It helps to have a notebook to write down what God is revealing to you through His Word.

Here is an example of how scriptural prayer flows out of our daily experiences. During her daughter's pregnancy, a mother became very concerned about the fate of her soon-to-be-born grandchild. The baby's mother and her husband had separated, then reunited, but were unsure whether they wanted to place the baby in an adoptive family or keep her. The grandmother's heart was breaking with anguish over this situation. One day while praying with a friend over the phone, all she could do was weep and beg God to do His will. Her heart was filled with praise to God when her daughter and her husband decided to keep the baby! She expressed her gratefulness and joy in this prayer from Psalm 29 and 30.

"Father in Heaven, we ascribe greatness, strength, and glory to You and your Holy Name! There is none like You, Lord. You are my strength and my shield, and my heart trusts in You. I exalt You, O Lord, because You lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemy win! Thank You for bringing my precious granddaughter home to her family. To us. I praise You for turning my mourning into dancing. Thank You for lifting my sorrow and giving me singing! I love You, Lord."

- If a verse inspires you to praise or prayer, write it down.
- Keep a record of how you used it to pray for yourself or someone else.
- You may want to jot it on a 3 x 5 card and take it with you to pray throughout the day. This will help you memorize the Scripture so you can pray it anytime, anywhere.
- You can find examples of prayer in the Bible by using a concordance to look up words like *pray*, *prayer*, *ask*, *seek*, or *request*. You could also start with Matthew 6:9-13, often referred to as The Lord's Prayer, and look up cross-referenced verses.

A Note about Biblical Context

As we pray through Scripture, it is important to notice the context of the passage you pray. To determine context, take time to read the verses before and after a passage you would like to use as a basis for prayer. While all Scripture is valuable for believers, some verses apply directly to each of us, while others are directed toward the nation of Israel or toward those who meet certain conditions. For example, someone might pray for healing for another, claiming Psalm 41:2-3. "The Lord will protect him and preserve his life. . . . The Lord will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness." However, the context from verse 1 says, "Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble." This promise is made to the person who has been considerate of those weaker than him or herself. There are many biblical examples of prayers for healing that might apply more directly to that situation. (See Supplication below).

We may, however, apply biblical *principles* in basing our prayers on specific verses. For example, Jeremiah 29:11 states, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" What a wonderful promise! God has hopeful plans for my future! This passage is written to the nation of Israel. Does that mean we may not pray, "Lord, thank You for the wonderful plans you have for my life"? Certainly not! There are other

Scriptures that speak about purpose and a future for us as God's children. Romans 8:28 is one verse that speaks of God's good purposes for us. Other examples are Philippians 2:13 and Psalm 57:2.

The ACTS Prayer Format

The ACTS prayer format was made available to Stonecroft prayer coordinators in July 2008. ACTS stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanks-giving, and Supplication. What follows has been organized in that format. Please refer to www.stonecroft.org for more about the ACTS prayer format.

ADORATION

"My knowledge of God led me to praise and give thanks each day as, through the actual words of Scripture, I meditated on His specific attributes."³

Praying Bible passages back to God can lead us to moments of sincere worship. The book of Psalms is known as the hymnal of the Old Testament as they were sung for public worship in the temple. What follows are several examples of passages from Psalms turned into prayers of adoration to the Lord.

"Lord, You are great and most worthy of my praise! I praise You for Your unfailing love and righteousness." See Psalm 48:1, 9-10.

"Lord Most High, it is good to praise your name. I'll shout about Your love this morning and Your faithfulness tonight! You, O Lord, are exalted forever. You are my Rock. You are holy and righteous!" See Psalm 92.

"I praise You, Lord! All creation praises You, for You created everything. Your splendor is greater than anything on the earth or in heaven." See Psalm 148.

You may want to try creating your own hymnal of Scriptures you've offered to the Lord as prayers of adoration by writing them down and keeping them with your Bible.

CONFESSION

In the words of the old Scottish proverb, confession is good for the soul. As a believer in Christ, being right with God through confession and forgiveness is essential for effective prayer. "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" (Psalm 66:18).

"Thank You, Lord that when I confess my sins, You are faithful and will forgive me." See Psalm 32:5 and 1 John 1:9.

"I have sinned against You, God! What I have done is wrong. Please forgive me, purify me, and restore my joy." See Psalm 51:4, 10-12.

³ Jensen, Rosemary. *Praying the Attributes of God*. Kregel Publications, 2002.

“Our great God, we have not done right. As Your people, we have not obeyed Your Word and we are sorry. Our nation has rebelled against You. Hear us in Your mercy, forgive us, and make us clean.” See Daniel 9:4-19.

THANKSGIVING

It’s exciting to use God’s Word in giving thanks to Him. There is so much we can thank Him for.

“Thank You, Lord, for saving me from sin through faith in Jesus Christ!” See Acts 16:31 and Romans 3:22-24.

“Father in Heaven, thank You that You are holy.” See Leviticus 19:2 and Matthew 6:9.

“Thank You, God, for the many good things You’ve done and for Your enduring love.” See Psalm 136.

“Lord, I am grateful You are the source of wisdom and knowledge.” See Proverbs 9:10.

“Thank You, Father, for giving us this meal.” See Luke 9:16, 11:3.

SUPPLICATION

The word *supplication* simply means to humbly ask for something. For the believer, this means asking of God. Supplication involves praying for other people, and for ourselves.

For our governmental leaders: “Father, thank You for _____. I pray that he/she will lead our city/state/nation wisely. Let it continue to be a peaceful place to live.” See 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

For spiritual needs: “Lord, please fill me with the knowledge of Your will. Let my life please you in every way.” See Colossians 1:9-11.

“May the Gospel come to _____ with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction.” See 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

For physical needs: “Jesus, have pity on me and heal my illness.” See Luke 17:13.

“Lord, I believe You are able to heal. Please make _____ well.” See James 5:15.

“Father, You’ve promised to provide all our needs, and we trust You to _____.” See Philippians 4:19.

In conclusion, keep reading the Bible, being alert for opportunities for prayer and praise that arise from His living Word. May you be blessed and be a blessing!

Personal Spiritual Growth

- Pray through one psalm a day, letting it guide your praise and prayer.
- Participate in the Stonecroft Bible Study, *Connecting with God: A Guide to Prayer*.
- Follow the ACTS prayer format as a guide for prayer.
- Keep a record – a prayer journal, a “hymnal” of biblical praises, a study notebook, memorization cards, daily verses on cards, etc.
- Find a prayer partner, and pray scripture together.
- Don’t think you must use certain words when you pray—pour your heart out to God in your own words.

Taking it to the Streets

- Pray for people by name and send them a note letting them know you prayed. Include the verses you used in your prayer.
- Share answers to prayer with people who may not know Christ yet.
- Offer to pray for people who share concerns with you. Do it right on the spot—with their permission, of course!
- Listen to the news and read the newspaper with discernment. Pray for needs, using Scripture to guide you.
- Attend community-focused prayer gatherings, such as National Day of Prayer events (celebrated annually the first Thursday in May).